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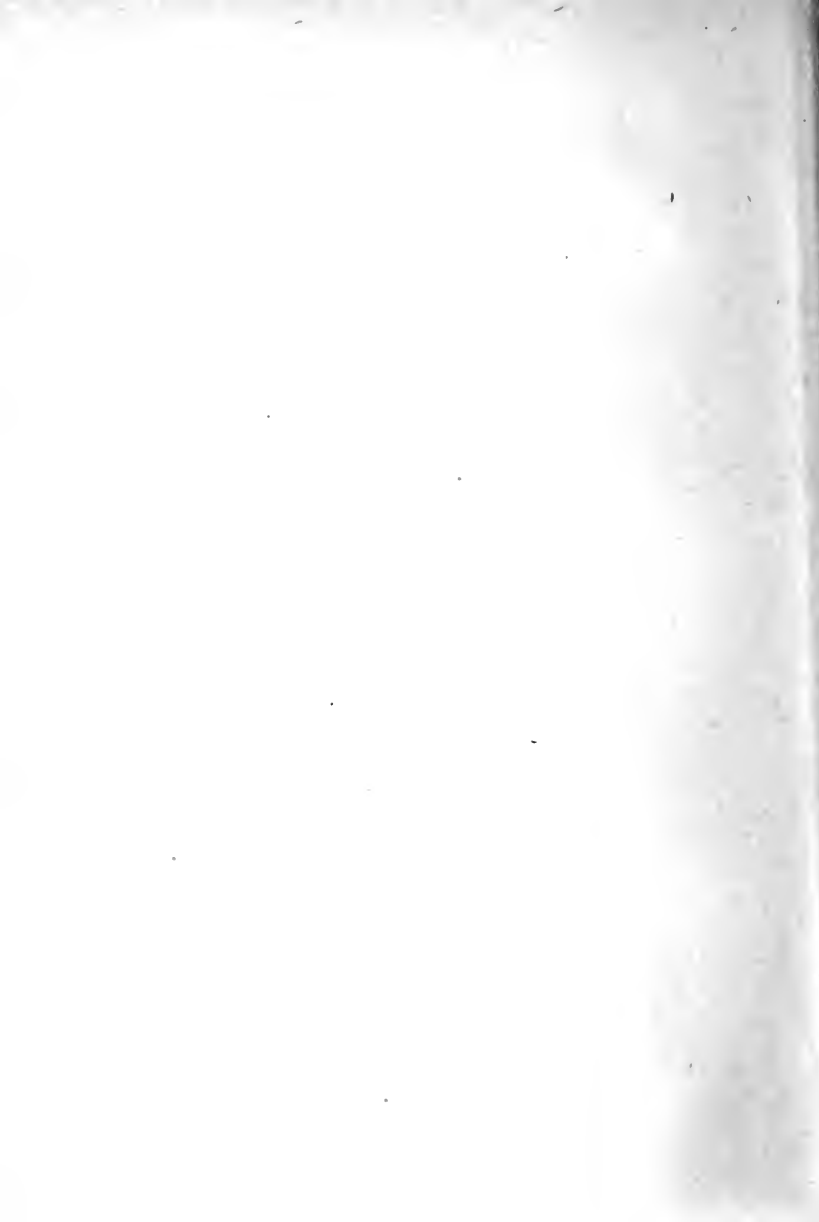
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IN QUARTERS WITH THE
25TH (THE BLACK HORSE) DRAGOONS.



Henrietta Eliza Winter - 1870

IN QUARTERS

WITH THE

25th (The Black Horse) Dragoons

BY

J. S. WINTER

NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS

FRANKLIN SQUARE

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A REGIMENTAL M. P.

THE good city of Wharnecliffe knew the Scarlet Lancers no more, and the regiment in possession of the barracks, which lay snugly under the shelter of the Castle Hill, was the Twenty-fifth ("The Black Horse") Dragoons.

For a few weeks the upper crust and the pretty demoiselles of Wharnecliffe were disposed to regret the old regiment, and to cast reflections unfavorable to the new-comers upon their appearance, their form, the color of their uniform, the class of their cattle, and the general tone of their demeanor. It is a state of things which mostly does happen when a regiment goes into fresh quarters; almost as invariably the impression fades away as the new arrivals become better known, until they in their turn depart, leaving lamentations and regrets behind them.

In this instance, as a matter of fact, the good people, and especially the pretty demoiselles of Wharnecliffe, did not take a very long time to

discover that they liked the Black Horse very much indeed, even so much as to vote them an improvement upon the Scarlet Lancers — an improvement because the commanding officer was a bachelor, *ergo*, the married officers were in the minority, which was not the case with those who had preceded them. There is no doubt whatever that the chief does set the fashion in most things to the officers of his regiment. I have found it an almost invariable rule that if the colonel goes clean shaven, except as to his upper lip, whiskers are tabooed by his officers; if the colonel is a downright milksop (oh yes! it is quite possible; I have known several) that regiment is never much good at polo or anything else; if the colonel has a fancy for wearing his unmentionables in a neat arrangement of wrinkles and bagginess, a similar taste will prevail throughout the regiment; while if he be unmarried, the regimental Benedicks are positively nowhere.

It was so with the Black Horse, and assuredly the pretty demoiselles of Wharnecliffe were not likely to grumble at the fact: anyway they didn't grumble — on the contrary. As for the Black Horse, they were very well satisfied with their

new quarters; they had come from Aldershot, which they to a man cordially detested. Wharnecliffe was bright and clean and cheery. There was good society, good shooting, and better hunting in the neighborhood; moreover, they hoped to be quartered there for two years.

Still, though at heart they were all so well satisfied with the pleasant lines in which their places had fallen unto them, there were spirits among them who found Wharnecliffe just tinged with dulness, who found not sufficient relaxation in afternoon teas and evening receptions, and appreciated even less the stately dinners and other entertainments periodically given at the Castle. They had fought bitterly against the unutterable sameness and weariness of Aldershot, and lo! they were not altogether satisfied when fate popped them down in the prettiest suburb of Wharnecliffe; but then, as some one or other very truly remarks, "There were spirits of discontent even in Paradise."

It was on a blithe and bonny June morning that a decided spirit of discontent entered the anteroom and turned over the papers lying on the big round table.

"Such a nuisance!" he exclaimed. "We've

got an industrious fit on again — no more leave. I particularly wanted to go to town next week.”

“Did you say so?” asked Lord Archie Falconer, with a laugh.

“Say so,” returned the other. “I said my mother was very anxious to see me, being very dangerously ill.”

“Yes.”

“And then the chief asked what was the matter with her, so I said quinsy. I couldn’t think of anything else, like an ass as I am. If I’d said consumption, I should have been safe.”

Lord Archie rose with a yawn and stretched himself. “Well, Orford, how you could reasonably expect to get leave on the strength of your mother having the quinsy, when here’s her name among the people at the State ball last night, I don’t know. You should try my plan, and go in for a set of false teeth; when I want leave, I just break a front one off, and go and show the chief — tell him I must have leave to go and see my dentist — and, as a matter of course, get it.”

Orford grinned from ear to ear, showing all his white and even teeth. “There are disadvantages even in having a set of perfect grinders,”

he said, laughingly. "What are you going to do to-day?"

"Going to dine at Moore Park," Lord Archie answered.

"Going to dine at Moore Park *again*? Well, you'll be nailed at Moore Park one of these fine days, take my word."

"Not I; 'mamma' and I are great friends."

"Yes, I've no doubt; 'mamma' would like to be 'mamma' to you in reality," Orford rejoined.

"Pooh — nonsense! I'm no such wonderful fish to catch, and a wife couldn't exactly live out of being called Lady Archie, you know," Lord Archie declared. "Oh, I'm safe enough."

"No fellow's safe when a girl gets frightfully gone on him," put in the only other occupant of the anteroom, with a sententious air.

"She isn't," asserted Lord Archie.

"Doesn't she call you Archie?"

"I don't know, upon my word; I never noticed."

"Take notice to-night," Urquhart said, wisely.

"Why, man, I've heard her."

"*Lord Archie*, as every one calls me," suggested Lord Archie.

"*Archie*," persisted Urquhart, obstinately.

"Ah!" reflectively. "Well, I'll take notice."

He went out then, leaving Urquhart and Orford together in the anteroom. Orford turned the papers over discontentedly.

"Oh, the devil!" he burst out at length. "I must do something to relieve the everlasting monotony of this dull hole."

"Get married," suggested Urquhart.

"Get married?"—contemptuously—then leaned his elbow on the table, and cast longing eyes up at the bright blue of the June sky. "How *jolly* town must be looking just now. The park never looks so pretty as it does this month—flowers all blooming, pretty girls riding or driving, or walking up and down. Oh! confound it all, why did I go into the Army, I wonder?"

But Urquhart, who had many resources in himself, and had but small patience with this kind of dissatisfaction and grumbling, had gone away and left him to chatter with the four walls, of which audience Marcus Orford soon grew weary.

It was very late when Lord Archie returned from Moore Park that night—so late that Urquhart was already gone to by-bye; while Orford, who was smoking his last pipe, was sitting on the senior captain's cot, having strolled in to borrow the loan of a belt for the morrow.

"There's Archie Falconer," he said, stopping his chatter to listen. "Yes, I thought I heard his cart just now."

Urquhart raised himself on his elbow and hammered at the wall. "Halloo!" cried a voice from the other side of it.

"Did she call you Archie?" Urquhart demanded.

"Shut up," was the answer.

"But did she call you Archie?" he persisted.

"Never mind," was the reply.

"Draw your own inference," laughed Orford, getting off the cot. "I'm off to roost. By-bye."

"By-bye," responded Urquhart, with a laugh. He hardly gave the joke another thought, and Marcus Orford appeared in the mess-room the following morning in such good-humor and high spirits that no one would ever have suspected him of having suffered the torments of *ennui* during the whole term of his natural life.

"What devilment is Orford up to now?" asked Lord Archie of Urquhart, next to whom he was sitting.

"Heaven knows," murmured Urquhart in reply. Both knew their man well, and neither doubted that sure enough the devilment was there.

But what it was did not come to light either on that day or the next. But on the morning following that, when Urquhart and Lord Archie went for a ride after breakfast, and before morning stables, Marcus Orford's handiwork proclaimed itself on every wall and fence and boarding in and for three miles around the good city of Wharnecliffe—proclaimed itself in great flaming, flaring posters some three yards long by two feet in height, bearing in letters a foot high the question—

DID SHE CALL YOU ARCHIE ?

Urquhart was the first to catch sight of it.

"By Jove, Archie!" he exclaimed; "look at that."

"Good heavens!" cried Archie Falconer, blankly; then looked round at Urquhart with sudden intelligence in his eyes. "It's that fiend, Orford, and oh, by Heaven, won't I pay him out for this; won't I?"

And didn't he? You haven't heard the story? Then I'll tell you.

A week later Marcus Orford's father, old Lord Ceespring, went for hours in the greatest danger of his life, for he was a corpulent old gentleman,

who had lived hard and fast, and married the prettiest girl of the season at five-and-forty, and had gone in for gourmandizing and politics ever since. Gourmandizing at all times, in season and out of season, gout or no gout, apoplexy or no apoplexy; but for politics in a dignified manner, and on what he with a grand air termed the respectable side of the House.

Imagine, then, this old gentleman's delight—he who was the most ultra, extreme, and rabid Conservative perhaps to be found in England—he who was of the bluest of the blue—he who believed in the divine right of the British aristocracy, and sneered at a new lord as he would have sneered at new port if it had been offered to him—imagine his delight when he received the formal announcement of the fact that his son, the Honorable Marcus Orford, his own child, the heir to the title of which he was the sixteenth baron who had borne it, had consented to stand in the Liberal interest for the borough of Wharnecliffe at the forth-coming election; not only so to stand, but actually in opposition to a scion of one of the most prominent Tory houses in the country. “Tut! tut! God bless my soul!”—only Lord Ceespring did not put it quite so delicately; in

fact, it was not his soul at all that he called in question, but his visual organs, which he did not exactly bless—"the boy's mad, mad, utterly mad; an utter lunatic. Oh, my lady! my lady! whatever can you and I have done that our son should make such a fool of himself as this?"

"What has he done? Not married some wretched girl?" cried Lady Ceespring, in alarm.

"Married!" contemptuously. "Why, he might have *married* a dozen women and not got himself into such a scrape as this. Read that, my lady;" and he flung a newspaper across the table to her, one paragraph of which was ostentatiously marked with ink.

"We understand that the Hon. Marcus Orford, eldest son and heir of Lord Ceespring, who holds a lieutenant's commission in the Black Horse (now quartered at Wharnecliffe), has consented to contest the city in the Liberal interest at the forthcoming election.

"We may add that Mr. Orford's father is one of the most prominent Conservatives in the Upper House."

Poor Lady Ceespring, who was lovely, but not strong-minded, and very fond of her boy, began to cry weakly, while the old lord fumed and fretted,

and hum'd and haw'd, and d—d as much as his manners and my lady's presence would allow him, as he read the painful and elaborate evidence of his son's degeneration and mad folly.

“Gentlemen—(“Gentlemen — bah ! snivelling fools,” was his comment)—

“Having been honored by a request from a number of the inhabitants of your ancient and historically famous borough to offer myself as a candidate for the honor of representing your interests in Parliament, I take this means to express my satisfaction and pride at having been so honored by you—(“young fool—ugh!”)—and I hasten to accept so flattering a request, and to assure you that though my abilities are far less than the representative of such a borough as yours should possess, yet I am confident—” (“Oh, I can't wade through all this blush—I'll see what his precious sentiments are.”)

“These opinions—oh ! what next?—‘Support Mr. Gladstone — amelioration of the people — breaking down of class distinction—(“good Lord ! what next?”)—vote for *any* measures tending to the ultimate adoption of manhood suffrage—(“oh ! he's mad, quite mad ! I shall have to get him shut up in an asylum. I see nothing else for it!”). Polit-

ical power should be wrested from property-holders, who have already annexed everything that is worth having.'” And here Lord Ceespring sat back in his chair and glared at the huge poster, at last crumpling it up in a bunch and slapping it in the acme of his rage and fury.

For a moment he seemed as if he was going to read no more; then he found curiosity getting the better of him, and smoothed it out again, continuing his task heroically.

“‘I am also in favor of the nationalization of the land’”—this made him speechless for quite two minutes, but he went at it again, determined to be brave and know the worst—“‘disestablishment of the Church’”—(“oh yes, yes—that’s at the root of it all!”). Lord Ceespring himself was as wicked an old sinner as ever hid his face in his hat, or shouted the responses for the benefit and edification of his tenants and laborers—but he believed in Church and State firmly for all that.

“‘Deceased Wife’s Sister Bill—(“yes, yes, that’s not so bad”)—reduction of the Civil List—(“now what the devil does he know about the Civil List, I should like to know?”)—to inquire into the amount and sources of Royal incomes’—(“demmed

impertinence *I* call it," cried Lord Ceespring, boiling over again).

"Well, what next? Er—'suspension of *all* perpetual pensions—for the payment of members of Parliament'—("yes, give up his own income to let the butcher and the baker or his own valet get into Parliament," in an excess of fury).

"Well, well, what next? Er—'abandonment of the Soudan, compensation to the families of natives slaughtered while rightly struggling to be free—("er—mighty fine that sounds, you young fool!").

"Withdraw our troops from Egypt and Afghanistan, and solicit the friendship of Russia and France especially—"oh! you would, would you? Solicit the friendship of the chief physician of Colney Hatch would be an improvement, I fancy").

"Independent government of India—Home Rule for Ireland—evacuate Malta, Cyprus, and Gibraltar—"ah! Marcus Orford, you've enjoyed independent government a good deal too long, I'm thinking"). I am, gentlemen, your humble and obedient servant' ("er—bah! the silliest and demmedest idiot that ever drew breath or brought disgrace on a good old House that has held its head up with the best of the land for

twenty generations — ‘humble and obedient’ — pah! I shall go and fetch him away at once, my lady,” he announced, flinging the poster from him, “and I shall take Dr. Marchmont with me. If the lad’s mad we must get him quietly put out of the way at once; but I’m afraid — I’m afraid he’s not mad, only bad”).

A few hours later the old lord and the family doctor arrived at Wharnecliffe, where on every hand they were met by copies of the flaring poster which had nearly been the death of the old man that morning. Still in many places were the remains of Marcus Orford’s joke — “Did she call you Archie?” — and in all these cases the address to the electors was pasted immediately above them, being also conspicuously placed elsewhere throughout the town.

By the time he reached the barracks, Lord Ceespring had got into a perfect white heat with suppressed rage and fury. Captain Urquhart was the first officer whom he saw.

“Your son is on a court-martial this morning,” he said, pleasantly. “He’ll be in soon.”

“Ah” — and the old lord looked suspiciously round the anteroom — “you haven’t got one of those posters up here?” he said.

Urquhart laughed. "No — we have only just heard about it. Orford is going to be finely roasted when he comes in."

"Roasted!" burst out the old man. "Of all the demmed fools — the demmed fools, sir; but I shall lock him up. I've brought the family doctor down with me — Dr. Marchmont, gentlemen — and — oh, here he is! Well, and pray what have you got to say for yourself?"

Marcus Orford looked puzzled, but offered the old man his hand; Lord Ceespring brusquely rejected it.

"No, sir; shake hands with your demmed demolition people — Church, State, land, incomes, rights! Dem it all, sir, why, your very wife's sister isn't sacred from you."

Marcus Orford looked blankly at his father, at the doctor, at his brother-officers, and back at his father again.

"What are you talking about?"

"Talking about?" the old lord almost screamed in his rage; "about your — your —" And here speech failed him, so he dragged the now tattered and crumpled poster out of his pocket, and waving it in his son's face fairly gobbled with excitement and fury.

Marcus Orford glanced at it, saw his signature at the foot, dropped it on the floor, looked round at his comrades, and caught a certain wicked something in Archie Falconer's eyes.

"You've done me in the eye this time, Archie," and then he burst out laughing; and so it all came out.

But they never forgot, nor let him forget, how the family doctor came down to Wharnecliffe for the express purpose of shutting him up in a lunatic asylum, nor how he was paid out for "Did she call you Archie?"

PAID OUT.

WITHOUT so much as the shadow of a doubt, the Honorable Marcus Orford was, if his mind chanced to be bent in a certain direction, a very ingenious young gentleman; yet when it came to him to have a desire—a desire about as strong as a desire could very well be—to be able to pay Lord Archie Falconer out for having, as he put it, “done him in the eye” in the matter of making a sort of Guy Fawkes member of Parliament of him—not only of paying him out, but of doing so in an adequate manner, with interest at something more than compound rate—why, he was simply at his wit’s end, for he didn’t know how to do it. The more he tried to hit upon a plan the less did he seem able to do so; and all the time he had the daily, nay, the hourly, aggravation of the other’s constant presence and unmerciful chaff—the aggravation of never being able to lift his eyes or to turn his head, to open his mouth, or even to take refuge behind a newspaper, without a fire of chaff from his exultant comrade.

"There's Bobblekins taking his morning dose of politics again"—and Lord Archie had a singularly clear and penetrating voice, so that whatever Babel of chatter and chaff might be going on at the time, and it happened that the whole length of the long mess-table lay between them, Marcus Orford never missed a single word that fell from the other's lips.

"Bobblekins is trying to think how he can pay me out," Lord Archie laughed, one dull and dreary afternoon, when Orford had come in tired and stiff from a day with the Castle hounds, and was in very truth scarcely thinking of anything, "and he can't manage it."

"All things come to him who can afford to wait," quoted Orford, coolly.

"I say, fancy old Bobblekins going in for quotations," Lord Archie cried. "What is that from?"

"It was what Balaam said to the ass," answered Orford, promptly, "and the ass said—"

"Go up, thou baldhead," put in Lord Archie, amid a yell of laughter from all the others in the room; for Orford, though young and comely, already showed a decided tendency to grow a forehead at the back of his head.

"Oh no, he didn't! He said, 'Am I not thine ass?'" and having delivered this shot, Marcus Or-

ford took refuge behind the outspread leaves of the first paper that came to hand.

It chanced to be one chiefly devoted to matters generally considered more interesting to the ladies than to the rougher sex—a paper not very often seen in the anteroom of the Wharnecliffe Barracks, and only there on that occasion because it contained an account of a fancy ball at which several officers of the regiment had been present.

Marcus Orford read on mechanically at the page where the paper had opened itself. But he read on in something like bewilderment and wonder, and things came to his knowledge the like of which he had never dreamed of before. He read of false diamonds and false curls—ay, not only false curls, but coverings for thin partings and bald patches—of fashionable fringes and curly crops to cover all the head; he read of “thin busts perfected”—*perfected!* he repeated to himself, in disgust—of sunny rays for golden hair; and at least a dozen washes for turning the blackest locks to the fairest flaxen tint in a single application. He read, and it fairly made his flesh creep, of skin-tighteners and lip salves; and then all at once he came to a little picture of a very stout lady and a very slim and elegant young girl, supposed to be the same

before and after taking anti-fat. And the next to that seemed to him to be the worst and the most absolutely depraved of the whole lot. It was called

“ORANGE-BLOOM BOUQUET.”

It set forth in glowing terms—such as a house-agent uses when he wants to persuade a credulous public that a stuffy little box with eleven tiny compartments is a desirable and commodious family residence, with all the most recent modern conveniences and sanitary improvements—that its properties were to impart a rich and healthful bloom to the complexion, being impossible for the keenest scrutiny to detect, even with the use of the microscope. “*It will not wash off!*”

Marcus Orford closed his eyes and let the paper fall upon his knee—“*it will not wash off.*” His breath came fast and hard, his heart beat and throbbed in great furious thumps, the blood surged to and fro in his veins—“*it will not wash off.*”

At last he got up and went quietly and with a great show of weariness out of the room, still holding the paper in his hand. Then at the door he turned back, and going to the desk, which chanced at that moment to be vacant, wrote down the ad-

dress of the house which sold the new preparation, and underneath it the figures 7s. 6*d*.

This he carefully folded and put in his pocket, and then leaving the paper upon the desk he took himself away to perfect his plans and gloat over his new discovery in solitude.

He did not gloat very long, for his whole soul thirsted for action. He shouted vigorously for his servant, and bade him secure him a cab and then get him some clothes out—"Yes, the gray will do." Then he wrote a letter, which he turned address down upon the blotting pad, carefully committing the sheet of paper he had brought from the ante-room to the flames of the fire, which was roaring and blazing half-way up the chimney. It is true that he was woefully stiff and weary, yet he dressed in next to no time; and having pocketed the precious letter, he took himself out to the cab, which had been waiting some ten minutes at the door below, as gayly and unconcernedly as if he had never been tired out by a hard day with the hounds in the whole course of his life.

A drive of ten minutes brought him to the Post-office, where he procured an order for seven-and-sixpence, after which the letter was safely dropped into the box. Marcus Orford breathed freely, with

a feeling that his plot had already begun to mature itself.

But he must dissemble. Archie Falconer must not guess this time that anything out of the common was in the wind or in Marcus Orford's brain. It was a distinct effort to him to do it, but he contrived that evening to go to mess with such a truly dejected air that even Archie Falconer forbore to chaff him, and beyond a murmured remark to his next neighbor, that really poor old Balaam seemed to be taking his defeat or his lack of constructive ingenuity to heart, he never once during the entire evening approached the subject of the great assembly which constitutes the legislature of this kingdom.

In due course of time Marcus Orford received, "carefully secured from observation" as the advertisement promised, the "*Orange-bloom Bouquet*." In the privacy of his own quarters he opened it, to find that it contained a small bottle of vivid crimson fluid, and a paper of closely-printed instructions for the use of the "Bloom." Marcus Orford pulled up his sleeve and proceeded to try the effect of it upon the upper part of his arm—first he got a tiny camel's-hair brush and painted a small patch of it, allowed it to dry on, applied

sponge and soap, with the result of washing it all off. His mouth went dismally down—till he all at once remembered that he had not even looked at the instructions; therefore he at once proceeded to study them carefully. "Take a little strong salt-and-water and bathe the cheeks with it—*this will strike the color*"—"Hurray!" said he to himself or the four walls—"then apply the stain and allow it to dry on, immediately afterwards washing it off with tepid water, when an exquisitely lovely and natural-looking bloom will permanently remain." "*Permanently remain!*" chuckled the Honorable Marcus, in an ecstasy of anticipation—"when an exquisitely lovely and natural-looking bloom will permanently remain."

It is no exaggeration to say that that day was the longest Marcus Orford had ever known in his life; the minutes slowly and leisurely dragged themselves away, and the hours seemed as if each needed a kick to make it follow the one which had unwillingly gone before it. He got through morning stables, some business in the office, went and saw one of his troop who was lying sick in hospital, dragged through lunch, a game of billiards, afternoon parade, two afternoon teas, and a long talk to the smartest and prettiest girl in Wharne-

cliffe, whom he met at the corner of the High Street. He went and bought himself some gloves and some cotton ties—nay, he even had his hair cut that he might not get back to barracks too soon, and so have any time to kill before dinner.

And on his way back he went into a chemist's, and bought a little bottle of chloroform! Oh, Marcus Orford! Marcus Orford!

Ay, and he used it, too. He waited in patience till the whole corridor which ran along the entire block of the officers' quarters was quiet and deserted, and then he went stealthily and noiselessly, like a burglar or a cat, and turned the handle of Lord Archie's door. As he expected, it yielded to his touch, and the door opened to him.

"Archie!" he said, in a low voice, but there was not a sound; all was as quiet as the grave or a Chinese city of the dead.

"Archie!" he said again, louder this time; "I say, Archie!"

But Lord Archie did not answer, though the stillness of the midnight hour was broken by the regular and deep breathing of a man buried in an absolutely sound and dreamless sleep.

Finding that this was so, Marcus Orford closed the door softly behind him, and advanced to the

side of the cot. A tall waxen candle in a grotesquely-moulded brass candlestick stood on the little table beside it; beside that a box of matches. He struck one gently and lighted the candle, setting it so that the light did not fall upon Lord Archie's face.

Then he took the tiny bottle of chloroform from his pocket and sprinkled a little of it upon a handkerchief, which he held to the nostrils of the sleeping man. As the damp cloth touched his face Lord Archie stirred uneasily and moved his arm. Then the powerful anæsthetic began to take effect upon him, and finding that a good shake was not sufficient to arouse him, Marens Orford proceeded to business. He had brought with him a sponge filled with a strong solution of salt-and-water, and with this he carefully dabbed Lord Archie's handsome aquiline nose; then he got out his brush and his bottle of "Bloom," and with equal care painted that feature all over. It did not take long to dry, and when he saw that state had been arrived at he produced another sponge and carefully washed it, drying it cautiously and gingerly with a clean silk handkerchief. This done, he blew out the light and crept away with all his paraphernalia and a safe conscience, for he knew that he had only

given Lord Archie enough chloroform to stupefy him, and not sufficient to do him the slightest harm.

Of the two he was the first to appear in the mess-room the following morning; but he had barely begun breakfast ere Lord Archie came in with a rush and a whirl and a gay, pleasant word for every one.

"Well, Balaam, old man," was his greeting to Orford.

"Well, mine ass," returned Orford, pleasantly. He almost betrayed himself by his first glance at Lord Archie—for sure enough the permanent bloom, which would not wash off, had imparted a painfully natural redness to his noble nose.

Lord Archie apparently had noticed nothing. He ordered his breakfast and took his place as unconcernedly as he could not possibly have done had he noticed the change, or rather partial change, of his complexion.

Not so the others, however—trust a handful of officers scrutinizing one another to be as careless or little observant as any one of them regarding his own countenance in a glass. So in this instance, before Lord Archie had been two minutes at the table, Strange cast a keen glance at him, and re-

marked, "What a red nose you've got this morning, Archie!"

"A red nose! *I?*" repeated Archie, blankly, putting up a hand to feel that organ instantly.

"Yes, you—it's as red as beetroot," Strange declared, positively.

"When is a nose not a nose?" asked Elliot.

"When it's a little reddish," raising a shout of laughter, in which Orford joined as loudly and as boisterously as any of them.

"I noticed it some time ago," put in Mackenzie; "it's been gradually getting worse for the last month or two."

"The devil it has," said Archie Falconer, in dire dismay, then got up and went to the great glass above the mantel-shelf to see if it was really true or they were only chaffing him.

But it was, alas! only too true—painfully true; and though Marcus Orford nearly choked with laughter, which was manfully suppressed, Lord Archie discovered nothing, but came dejectedly back to the table, and surveyed his comrades mournfully.

"I don't drink," he said, at length. "I drink less by far than any man in the regiment. I don't smoke much; it must be my digestion, and if that

once gets out of order, it plays the very deuce and all with one's constitution all round."

"I shouldn't at all wonder," Strange observed. "Have you had any other symptoms, Archie?"

"I'd a beastly dream last night," answered the victim, innocently; "dreamt I was being smothered, and woke up shaking all over."

"What time was it? Did you look?" asked young Eden.

"Yes, it was ten minutes to two. I struck a light to see," Lord Archie replied.

Again Marcus Orford's inner man was shaken by convulsions of laughter, but he contrived to hide it all, and so the pretty play was played on.

The doctor told Lord Archie that his digestive organs were entirely out of order, and promptly put him upon a diet and a course of restriction such as simply made life a burden to him, and had worse than no effect upon the complexion of his nose.

For the nose gradually but surely got worse; the exquisitely lovely and natural-looking *bloom* deepened visibly in tint, and Lord Archie's wretchedness deepened in proportion—rather beyond proportion for the matter of that.

"Here's poor old Archie and his nose!" came to

be the usual remark when the victim made his appearance among his fellows.

And, "Well, Archie, how's your poor nose?" was the general salute he met with.

He was not touchy nor yet proud, this noble lord of the house of Falconhurst, and at any moment he was ready and willing to dilate upon the infirmity which had become a serious trouble to him.

"Why don't you try change of air?" the doctor asked him one day, perhaps a little impatiently.

"Oh, I'm not going among my people such an object as this," he answered, dejectedly. "Why, dash it, my old grandmother would be imploring me to join the Blue Ribbon Army."

The doctor laughed, and Lord Archie continued.

"It's one of the things nobody ever believes one about. Who in the barracks really believes that, as a matter of absolute fact, drink is not the cause of it?"

"Well, I don't for one, Archie," Orford declared, heartily.

"Don't you really, Marcus?"—eagerly. "By Jove! you're a right down good fellow, and I'm sorry I ever played you that trick about the election business—'pon my soul I am now."

"Oh, come, come, old man!" Marcus answered,

bursting with laughter, yet preserving his outward calmness excellently well, "don't take that tone. You're not going to depart this life; and as to your nose, why *I* should say if you persist in going in for the smallest waist in the regiment, and go to a tailor who straps you in as tightly as you can breathe, with a machine and a couple of men to work it, and *then* measures you for your overalls and tunics, why how can you expect to have anything but a red nose?"

Lord Archie looked suddenly enlightened.

"Do you think that could be it?" he asked of the doctor.

"It's not at all improbable," answered the doctor, with a sweet air of evasion which is common to the profession at large.

"I'll have all my uniforms let out at once," the wretched victim declared, whereat Marcus Orford laughed out aloud—he couldn't help it for the very life of him—as if it was the very finest joke ever he had heard in all his life.

"Ah! you may laugh; your nose is a decent color," the victim cried. "I too might laugh if it was anybody's nose but my own. I got an idea this morning. I don't know whether it's any good or not," dejectedly.

“What is it?”

“Well,” hesitatingly, “I saw an advertisement from a chap who does a good deal in the appearance line—fills up wrinkles and tightens skins that have got baggy. He *says* he can cure red noses, but as his advertisement adds, ‘you must pay’—not that any cost would matter,” with a great sigh.

And that night the nose got redder, but unfortunately, in the middle of the operation, Lord Archie moved suddenly, which made Orford give a great start, and caused him to drop the bottle.

It was the work of a moment to catch it up, but the mischief was done—a great crimson stain was cast over the bedclothes, along the sleeve of Lord Archie’s night-shirt, and on the arm beneath it, and one great splash had spurted across his breast and across his throat. He was so evidently awaking that Orford blew the light out and bolted, and then Lord Archie, awaking to smell the smouldering wick of the barely extinguished candle, roused himself and struck a light, felt that his sleeve was wet, and—“Well,” as he said in the morning to Orford, “you brute, and you for one didn’t believe that it came from drink.”

“But I paid you out that time, Archie,” answered Orford, dodging a forage-cap.

THE MEM-SAHIB'S PROMISE.

It was on a brilliant January day, towards the close of the afternoon, that Thomas Urquhart, Captain of the Black Horse, pushed a big chair up to the fire in the anteroom, and sat down therein to enjoy *The Naval and Military Gazette*, which had just arrived. He had the room to himself, for the entire regiment seemed to have gone mad over the superb skating which the continuous frost afforded the inhabitants of Wharnccliffe.

There were one or two exceptions, however; the orderly officer for the day was lying on his cot, reading one of Whyte-Melville's novels, and smoking the first lazy pipe of the fourteen hours of wearying and tedious work which constitutes the time known as being on duty; and before Urquhart twice turned a leaf, the door opened and the colonel entered the room.

"All alone, Urquhart?" he remarked, cheerily.

"All alone, sir—cursing my fate a little that last month's sprain won't let me think of the cas-

tle mere, outside edges, spread-eagles, and the like."

"Not much spread-eagle about your form," the chief said, with a laugh; then asked, as he settled himself comfortably, with his back to the chimney-shelf, "any news?"

"Nothing in particular," Urquhart replied, offering him the paper as he spoke. The chief, however, declined it with a wave of his hand and a murmur of thanks, and then Urquhart spoke again.

"By-the-bye, sir, have I not heard you speak of having been in the regiment with Sir John Farquhar?"

"Certainly—to be sure I was, two years or more—what about him?"

"He's dead—that's all," answered Urquhart, simply.

"Dead! Ah! Poor Jack Farquhar! A better fellow and a braver officer never drew breath," the colonel said, sadly. "So he's gone at last, after one-and-twenty years of it—poor Jack!"

"One-and-twenty years of what, sir?" Urquhart asked, curious to know the meaning of his chief's tone.

"Of misery, Urquhart, misery. Ah, poor Jack!

I never like to think of him—never! I remember when I joined he was the very life and spirit of the old Black Horse—full of fun and play as a kitten four months old or a monkey that has never felt cold weather. But a cruel blight fell on him in '57, and Jack never held up his head after. Poor Jack!"

"And how, sir?" Urquhart inquired.

"I'll tell you," said the colonel. "Jack was just seven-and-twenty when I joined. He wasn't a baronet, nor had he any hopes of ever being one then, but was just Jack Farquhar, with a modest income of six hundred a year over and above his pay. Well, I hadn't been two months in the regiment, and we were just off to India then, when Jack fell in love—not only in love, but with the youngest and loveliest daughter of old Lord Saturn, who was, just as his son is after him, one of the proudest and haughtiest men in England or out of it.

"Jack knew well enough that if he, with only his handsome face and his modest six hundred a year to recommend him, were to go to old Lord Saturn and ask for the hand of the Lady Marjory Starshine in marriage—Lady Marjory, who was just sixteen, and destined to become a court beau-

ty—he would be declined with thanks and politely shown the exact position of the door, while measures would be taken effectually to secure the lady from any further communication with him; and, as he didn't see the good of such an arrangement—to himself, at least—he just persuaded Lady Marjory to run away with him.

“I don't think she needed very much persuasion, for Jack was an amazingly handsome fellow, and she was desperately fond of him. Anyhow, run away they did, and managed to get safely and legally tied up and made man and wife.

“The Saturns were furious; but since all the blustering and fuss in the world cannot undo what the marriage ceremony has accomplished, they contented themselves with blotting Lady Marjory's name out of the family tree, and blotting her once and forever out of the list of their acquaintances.

“But Lady Marjory and Jack didn't care, not a button; Lady Marjory had been brought up by servants and governesses, almost a stranger to her parents and her elder sisters, who were all considerably older than herself, and had married very early to become such very great ladies as scarcely to know the young sister in the nursery, even by sight.

“And, as I said, she and Jack didn’t care; she laughed when she heard her name had been blotted out of the family tree; and a few weeks later we sailed for India.

“We went round the Cape, but Lady Marjory and Jack Farquhar never seemed to find the voyage in the smallest degree tedious or irksome. Whenever Jack had nothing to do—and on board ship that was pretty often—they used to get away into a corner together, and sit in the most blessed unconsciousness that they ever so much as raised a smile or caused a single thought of amusement. If they had known it, I believe she would have laughed more heartily than any of them, for she was a merry little soul, and loved a joke dearly.

“Her absolute faith in Jack was wonderful; she believed him capable of doing any mortal thing better than any other human being under the sun. Sometimes the fellows used to try and tell yarns too wonderful to be surpassed, and her great blue eyes would open wide with the surprised and incredulous stare of a child who hears of some marvellous fact for the first time, with never a doubt of its being as true as gospel. But it was always the same in the end; when the wonderful yarn came to a close, she always pulled

herself together and made answer, 'Oh, that's *nothing* to what Jack did; he shot a bear, or a tiger,' or perhaps what then was a fabulous number of partridges. Once, I remember, they tried, some of the mischievous youngsters, to trap her by a long yarn about a fox, but faith was always too much for them, and so that time also.

"'Took you three hours to shoot a fox?' she commented, scornfully; 'why Jack would have eaten it in that time.' Poor little soul, it was a nice point for some time whether she was not to be caught by the assertion that they had shot a fox or whether it was mere accident which saved Jack from being credited on his wife's evidence with that unpunishable but unpardonable crime.

"Well, we landed at last, and went up-country to Muttrapore, where we settled down, and where by-and-by Jack and Lady Marjory had a child born to them. A girl it was—a pretty little thing as babies go—just like her, with big blue eyes and a lot of flaxen fluff on its head. 'Pon my word, to see that pretty young thing strutting about with her baby in her arms—she scarcely more than a babe herself—calling one's attention to the length of its eyelashes and the closeness of its grasp, or

bidding one declare it was the living image of Jack, when the little soul's own face was reproduced with a fidelity which was perfectly ludicrous.

"So the months passed over and the new year came in—the year of '57, so eventful in the annals of India, so long to be remembered by the British people. There were signs of the coming storm even then, symptoms of dissatisfaction and discontent, murmurings of fanatical hatred.

"At Muttrapore there was a big native garrison, but they were quartered quite on the other side of the town to the Black Horse. Our barracks and bungalows all lay on the highest ground, most of the officers living pretty close to the barracks.

"Only two were at any distance, and these were the bungalows of the doctor, old Fitzgerald—you remember him—and the Farquhars.

"The Farquhars' was the farthest away, being two miles at least from any house but the doctor's, and was, in fact, about equidistant from the cavalry barracks and the native lines.

"I remember when the news came that the Mutiny had really broken out at Meerut, that the trouble which had been smouldering so long had burst into the fiercest flames. Nobody talked

very much about it, but men looked at one another, and the faces of the women grew white and anxious, though they kept very quiet and silent over it. Only little Lady Marjory seemed to have no fear—none at all.

“‘If we were in a native regiment,’ she explained one evening when one of the other ladies remarked how brave and gay she was—‘if we were in a native regiment I should give myself up for lost at once; but here in the midst of the Black Horse I feel as safe as if I were in the Tower of London.’

“‘And you three miles from the British lines?’ asked the lady, incredulously.

“Little Lady Marjory laughed outright. ‘They won’t rise like a mushroom in a single night,’ she cried. ‘We shall know—Jack will know days, ages before any outbreak happens at Muttrapore. But till it is close upon us don’t ask me to take my baby into the cramped-up quarters we should have allotted to us within our lines. I couldn’t; why dear baby would be suffocated; and, you know, we can get there in half an hour any time.’

“‘You had better be a fortnight too early than an hour too late, Lady Marjory,’ the major’s wife urged.

“‘Oh, Jack won’t let me be a moment too late!’ cried the little woman, confidently.

“So the other gave up the useless attempt to frighten her into seeking a place of safety. As she said to me an hour afterwards, ‘What could I do with such a little fool? Her superb faith in Jack—touching and pathetic as it is—simply blinds her to all sense of danger, even when the danger is so near that it may burst like a thunder-storm over our heads at any moment.’

“‘You had better try your powers of persuasion on Jack himself, Mrs. Le Mesurier,’ I suggested; ‘shake him and you’ll shake her.’

“Poor little fool! She bade us all a gay ‘good-night’ when the band was over, and drove away to the bungalow three miles distant, sitting as unconcernedly by Jack’s side as if she had been driving out of the Park to quietly eat her dinner in Green Street or Cavendish Square. Her light laugh rang out upon the night air just as Mrs. Le Mesurier asked the question, ‘What can I do with such a little fool?’

“Poor little fool! We saw her riding each morning, and regularly each evening she and Jack appeared at the band. Other entertainments there were none during those anxious days, those

being only kept going in order that the every-day life of the English residents might appear to the natives to be going on in the ordinary every-day manner. The ladies kept away from one another's houses lest they might be led into talking the situation over, and so express signs of fear which might be overheard by the ever-watchful native servants. The subject was never mentioned in the mess-rooms for the same reason, and when it was absolutely necessary that it should be discussed we used to go out into the great, bare, deserted square, and walk up and down there, knowing that we were safe from listeners.

"And every night Jack and Lady Marjory used to come to the band, and she would call out in her sweet, injudicious way, utterly regardless of all precautions or what listeners might be about, or the construction which might be put upon her words—'Ah! Here we are again, you see, all safe and sound, like a couple of bad shillings, not to be got rid of. You know they say naught is never in danger.'

"And Jack, poor chap, he was so proud of his little wife's pluck and the real bravery of her spirit that he never used to check her in any way. 'Oh, Marjie don't know what fear is,' he used to

boast, when we told him what a dangerous game they were playing, and how the mine might spring up under their feet or ours at any moment; 'I don't think I could frighten her if I tried, and I'm not going to try.'

"Well, a week or two went over like this, and then May went out and June came in. The signs of the times crept nearer and nearer to us, and the thunder-clouds rolled up over us and hung ready to burst. And then one night, when we were just finishing dinner, a carriage dashed up to the door, and Jack Farquhar, looking anxious and flurried, rushed in.

"'I say, you fellows,' he panted, 'do you know there's something up at the other side of the town, in the native lines?'

"'No!' we all cried, for we had not expected it quite so soon.

"'Yes, my bearer came in and told me that the native troops had risen and massacred their officers—so he'd been told. He didn't quite believe it, but there was certainly a rising. So I came along to let you know, sir,' he added to the colonel.

"'Quite right! You'd better bring your wife in,' said the colonel—he happened to be dining at

mess that night—‘or have you left her with Mrs. Le Mesurier?’ Mrs. Le Mesurier’s bungalow was not a stone’s-throw from the gates, the colonel’s about a quarter of a mile away.

“‘I haven’t brought her,’ said Jack, all at once turning white to his very lips, as if in that moment he realized for the first time what the danger really was.

“‘Good God! man,’ cried the colonel, angrily, ‘are you mad? You’ve been acting like a fool-hardy idiot the last month or more, but who was to dream you would carry your scatter-brained folly so far as this? Good God! it is too horrible to think of.’

“Jack’s knees seemed to fairly give way under him. ‘I left her in Jamsee’s charge,’ he stammered. ‘She wouldn’t come with me; she wanted to put the child’s things together, and her jewellery, and—’

“‘Don’t stand gabbling there,’ the colonel cried—he was in a furious rage and a horrible fright, for Lady Marjory was one of his special favorites, and he had from the very beginning estimated the danger of the coming storm at something very near its proper value; ‘let us be off at once, and pray the Lord we be not too late.’

“Poor Jack fairly sobbed aloud in his agony of fear and dread, and followed the colonel out in abject meekness. At the very first hint of the bad tidings, the colonel had sent out the order for the regiment to be in readiness, and hastily giving Le Mesurier instructions upon which to act during his absence, rode off at the head of a piquet, as hard as their horses could take them, for the Farquhars’ bungalow. I followed last of them all.

“In spite of Jack’s horse having just come the three miles they had to traverse, he was the first to reach the house. I had gained the colonel’s side by that time, but Jack was well on in front. As we rounded a turn in the road which brought us in sight of the bungalow, Jack turned round—‘It’s all right—all is just lighted up as usual;’ then added, in a lower voice, ‘But, sir, cured of carelessness in that respect forever.’

“It all looked just as usual, as Jack said—there were lights here and there, open doors in one or two places, dogs barking loudly and furiously as somehow dogs always do bark when you approach a house in India at night.

“Jack pulled up at the gate, and shouted for a syce to come and take his horse. ‘Where the devil are they all?’ he burst out, irritably; but nobody came.

"He jumped down, and flung the reins to one of the dragoons—the colonel and I followed him. 'They've all bolted off to see the row,' he explained, as we went along the drive; 'but it will be all right, Marjie promised she would look out for me—she'll be at the drawing-room veranda. Ah! there she is,' he cried. 'Safe! safe! my darling.'

"He sprang up the steps of the veranda to where Lady Marjory was standing, just on the threshold of the door leading into the drawing-room. She was wearing a flowing muslin gown, entirely white, and stood holding the lintel of the door.

"Jack rushed to her and caught her in his arms, with a glad and triumphant cry—'Oh, my darling!—my—' And then—upon my soul, Urquhart," the colonel broke off, in a shaking voice, "I can scarcely tell the story after all these years—and then there was silence for one dreadful instant ere, with an agonized shriek, he threw up his arms and fell down at our feet, apparently as dead as the poor little woman standing in the door-way."

"Dead!" cried Urquhart.

"Dead—yes! With a cord tied tightly about her pretty, soft, childish throat, with her great blue

eyes staring blankly before her, as, with the horror still stamped upon them, they had stared when she stood alone to look a grim and ghastly death in the face—dead! yes, stone dead, with her dead baby tied up in her arms, and herself tied there to watch for the husband as she had promised him she would do. I think it was the ghastliest sight I ever saw, to see that poor dead thing with the great clusters of white, sweet-smelling roses nestling against her poor strangled throat.

“‘So much for Jamsee’s fidelity,’ said the colonel bitterly, as we raised Jack from the ground.

“‘I don’t know—look there,’ I answered; and, sure enough, there just outside the door lay the faithful Jamsee, with a knife clean through his heart.

“We got the poor little lady and the dead baby into the carriage, and finding that all our efforts did not restore Jack to himself, just popped him in and drove back again.

“We took her in to Mrs. Le Mesurier’s house, where she lay all that night and was laid away quietly in the morning, with her baby on her breast. Jack never saw her, and when, days after, he came to himself, and gradually remembered what had happened, we never told him the exact manner of her death.

"But though he never knew how she had been done to death by the murderers, he never held up his head afterwards. I believe he tried his very best to meet his end during the awful times which followed. Where shot and shell were fiercest, where death and disease were most rife, there might Jack Farquhar be found; but his was a charmed life, and, as you see, he has had to live through his one-and-twenty years of the martyrdom of self-blame and remorse."

"And Lady Marjory's murderers?" Urquhart asked.

"I had the pleasure of seeing every one of them disposed of," answered Colonel Ennis, in a tone of satisfaction.

THE PIANO FIEND.

A STORY IN FIVE ACTS.

EPISODE I.

OUR name is Moggeridge — Algy, Maud, and Evangeline Moggeridge—and we live in a pretty little semi-detached villa on the Castle Road, about half-way between the Cavalry Barracks and the city of Wharnecliffe.

Mother says — oh yes, we have a mother, of course, though pa died five years ago — that the Laurels is a nasty little cramped-up box of a place, and that we could have got a house twice as large for the same money on the other side of the town a little way out; but then, as Maud and I say, there would be no barracks on the other side of the town, and it isn't likely two smart girls like us were going to bury ourselves just to gratify an old lady's whims. And as we tell mother, she has had her day, and we want ours—and we mean to have it, too.

I consider that Maud is a very handsome girl,

though she persists in saying she is not half so handsome as I am. Maud is a tall, dashing girl, with a slender figure and lots of style. She has big brown eyes (they look glorious when they're touched up a bit underneath), plenty of color, a little short nose, rather a wide mouth, with very white teeth and ripe red lips. Then, too, she has heaps of dark silky, fluffy hair, which curls all over her forehead, half hides her ears, and lies at the back of her milk-white neck in bewitching little waves; all the rest is gathered in a mass at the top of her head.

People say we are very much alike.

We were sorry when the Scarlet Lancers went away; it was such a becoming uniform, and the officers were continually passing to and fro in their regimentals. I *do* like to see a man in regimentals; but then I dote upon the military—so does Maud. We didn't get to know any of the Scarlet Lancers; but we heard before the Black Horse arrived that one of the married officers had taken the house next door to us, when, of course, things would be different. And very glad we were of the change, for the people who lived in that house before were very common shop-people, or something of that kind. And what was most aggra-

vating of all, mother got to know them, and used to be always going in and out gossiping with Mrs. Barker, who dropped her *h's*, and used to wash her own door-step if she happened to be without a servant.

Mother wouldn't listen to reason about it either; but, as Maud said, mother has a taste for low things, and no idea of taking a proper position in society.

Well, the regiment arrived at the barracks, and the new people came and took possession of the next house—or rather their luggage did, in charge of a lot of soldiers, who tumbled it out in the middle of the road, and made a litter and mess with straw and paper and rubbish that wasn't cleared away for weeks.

Just as the soldiers were going away, three cabs appeared, all piled up with luggage, a man-servant, a fat old woman we thought must be the cook, and a smart young lady whom we took to be the mistress, until presently she appeared with a cap and an apron on, and helped to unpack the things. We found out afterwards that she was the lady's-maid, and did a little light house-work. Maud and I took the opportunity of going to the end of the road to post a letter, just to get a peep at the

name on the luggage, and it fairly took our breath away, it looked so romantic and distinguished—

CAPTAIN OTHO STRANGE,
Twenty-fifth Dragoons, Wharfedcliffe.

Captain Otho Strange! Fancy being called Mrs. Otho Strange, and putting it on your cards, and seeing it on your letters! What luck some people have! What a shame he happened to be married! and how well either of our names would have gone with his—Maud Strange, Evangeline Strange! What luck some people have!

We didn't think much of the furniture; it all took to pieces, and the man put everything together in the road, not caring a bit who was looking on. There was a big wooden bath, an oval thing with a lid; the lid came off; three smart black and gold legs came out of the tub first, and were quickly screwed in so that it made a table. I suppose they called it a *gypsy* table.

All the dining-room furniture seemed to be the same sort of thing. A huge packing-case was opened, and out came arms and legs and backs and seats of chairs; these were all screwed together and carried in-doors—common-looking things they were, too, not half so good as ours that we are

always bothering mother to get rid of. Then the packing-case itself turned inside out and made into a chiffonier—such a thing! I wouldn't have owned it.

We had a good stare at everything, for the servants didn't seem to mind on-lookers a bit. There were nice squares of carpet, Turkey or Persian, and very handsome velvet chairs, lots of lovely skin rugs, and pictures without end.

But as far as we could tell, the furniture in the drawing-room consisted of nothing but big velvet chairs and one or two cases which turned inside out and made into big velvet ottomans. Still, it all looked very nice when it was done, for they had the gas lighted one night and forgot to pull the blinds down, so Maud and I went to the gate to have a look, and saw everything. There were white lace curtains as well as the velvet ones, and the big chairs set here and there on the handsome carpet, and the skin rugs just anywhere. And one of the bath-lid tables had got a pretty lace and muslin cover, with lots of colored ribbons hanging from it; so with half a dozen plants the room looked very habitable indeed.

Mary, our servant, told us they were expected by the last train.

EPISODE II.

We have seen them ; they came out quite early, long before ten o'clock, he in his regimentals, and she in a fresh white cotton breakfast gown, trimmed with Madeira-work—so pretty ; and she stood holding the top of the gate with one hand and picked a bit of fluff off his coat with the other ; and then he said something, and she laughed, and then he laughed too, and patted her face with his hand ; and then he actually saluted her, just as if she had been a stranger.

She stood leaning her arms on the gate for a good bit after he went—long after he had disappeared round the corner. Maud and I went out into our garden, and picked a few dead leaves off the rose-trees and gathered ourselves a button-hole. And then, while we were there, and Mrs. Strange was staring up and down the road, who should come along but another officer, in regimentals too, but he was on horseback—such a handsome fellow, and younger than her husband—and he waved his hand to her, and reined his horse up just outside the gate.

“Halloo, Kitty!” said he, “I hardly expected to see you this morning.”

"Well, Bill," she called back; and then, yes, actually, if he didn't bend down and give her a great, sounding kiss—yes; and the man-servant, who had come out to do something at a creeper which grew up by the window, standing by. And Maud said to me, "Ah, don't officers' wives get a good time, just?"

"Where's Strange?" he asked, presently, at the same time stealing a glance at us.

"Just gone," she answered.

"Well, I must be off, or I shall be too late for officers' call. By-bye."

"By-bye," she said, with a laugh; and then she watched him go down the road too. Fancy a woman being able to stand at a gate and watch two good-looking fellows go down the road in less than half an hour.

But she didn't go in then. She strolled about the little garden, and had a long talk to the man about the flowers and the creepers. She didn't seem a bit stuck up either, for she laughed right out twice, and the man laughed too, though he put up his hand and pretended he didn't. However, at last she went in-doors and left him.

How jolly it must be to have a man-servant, and tell him just what you want him to do? What

luck some people have! And, as Maud said to me, she wasn't half as good-looking as us.

"What shall we do?" I said to Maud.

"Oh, go in and sing something," she answered. She's awfully proud of my singing, Maud is; and I knew she wanted Mrs. Strange to hear what I could do in that way.

Well, I went in and I sang "The Lost Chord," just to clear my voice and set me going, and then "In the Gloaming" and "Golden Love." I'm awfully fond of that, it's so touching—

"Never to part, oh, darling, never more,
Until the angels call us home to rest!"

I sang ever so many more after that—all my best songs, in fact—last of all "Laddie"—

"Oh, Laddie, Laddie, Laddie,
Come back if 'tis but to say,
The angels above have found thee alone,
And borne thy burden away!"

I do like that song; one can put so much *expression* into it!

I didn't sing any more after that, but Maud said she thought she'd practise a bit. She's a splendid player, is Maud, so dashing and brilliant. She played a good lot that morning—more than

usual; in fact, until Algy came in and it was our dinner-time.

When Algy went back to the office I strolled out as far as the gate with him. But he went away with a horrid short pipe in his mouth, and told me to go in and not make an exhibition of myself. *That* was because I tried to pick a great, long, carroty hair off his coat. I didn't go in, but I wished I hadn't come out. That's the way with brothers; they're so provoking, and they always make you feel so small!

Well, it wasn't very long after that that Maud called out "Evangeline—*oh!*" and made a rush to the window. I went after her, and saw the very loveliest turn-out I have ever seen in our road before. Of course it belonged to the Stranges. It was a sort of low dog-cart made of basket-work, and drawn by the prettiest pair of ponies ever I saw. The linings were rifle green, and there was a good deal of brass on the harness; the ponies were brown—very dark. Captain Strange came out first, smoking a *pipe*—just such a horrid dirty thing as Algy persists in using. He had no hat on, and wore a plain light gray suit—dittoes, you know—and had his hands in his pockets. He went out into the road and walked all round the

ponies, punched them here and there, and slapped their necks, smoothed their legs down—some of them, that is—and looked at their feet. And then she came out and looked, and she punched them and slapped them and smoothed their legs. And didn't she look stylish, just, all in black, with beads everywhere that glittered in the sunshine like a lot of black diamonds. She had a little white straw hat, with a great bunch of creamy roses at the front, and tan gloves sewed with black, and not so much as a bit of ornament about her—not a bracelet, nor a necklet, nor an ear-ring, not even a watch-chain; nothing but a little gold brooch to fasten her collar; and Maud, who had got the opera-glasses to get a good look, said it was a perfectly plain bar of gold, with raised gold letters—just the name, "Otho." Then Captain Strange called Charles, and the man came running out with a parasol and his hat and gloves. He bent down when he was putting his gloves on to hear something his wife said, and then he turned round and gave our windows such a stare! I dare say she was telling him what smart girls we were.

EPISODE III.

Well, I never! Of all the insults— But I'll tell you about it. Maud and I went and called on Mrs. Strange this afternoon. We knew she was in, but Charles said she wasn't at home. Of course we couldn't say so, so we left our cards, and I think our cards look very well.

Maud Moggeridge.

Evangeline Moggeridge.

And actually they went out for their drive as usual half an hour later, and as soon as their backs were turned, if that impudent Charles didn't come to our house and ring the bell!

"Mrs. Strange's compliments," said he, handing Mary an envelope, "and she thinks there must have been some mistake." And off he went.

"It's to apologize for his saying she wasn't in,"

said Maud. But it wasn't. There was no address on the envelope, and when we opened it, there fell out *our own cards*.

And I suppose she calls herself a lady!—a vulgar, stuck-up thing. So Maud and I resolved to let her see that we are as good as she any day of the week. Just fancy! after our condescending to go and call on a brazen-faced thing like that, who carries on with another fellow as she does! *I* wonder her husband stands it; but he doesn't care, not a button, and the young officer simply *lives* there. *I* can't tell what either of them can see in her.

EPISODE IV.

Another insult. I never saw such insolent people in all my life. If that Charles didn't actually come again with a note for Mrs. Moggeridge. But I'll tell you. It began, "Dear Madam," and it said, in the most brutally plain terms, that his wife, being an author of distinction, found our piano and our singing—Maud's playing and *my* singing, if you please!—a very great hinderance, and that they would be very much obliged if we could abstain from music between the hours of ten and one in the morning.

Mother was out when the note came, and of

course we hadn't waited for her to come in to open it, so Maud put it in the fire, and didn't we let them have it, just! It was half-past nine when the note came, and we sat down to the piano and kept at it till we saw him come home to lunch at one, and I must say I closed the instrument with a feeling that I hadn't made my throat sore for nothing. There was a good deal of satisfaction in that.

"There!" I exclaimed, as we watched them drive away that afternoon, "I think we've let 'your obedient servant, Otho Strange, captain,' know how much value we set on you and the author of distinction, and I hope you liked it."

But they didn't look as if they liked it at all, either of them, but we paid them out. He used to scowl at the windows, and she used to sneer as she went out, and if we met either of them in the street, they used to look straight past us and pretend they didn't see us. Such humbug!

But we paid them out; we played and we sang morning, noon, and night, except when they were out in the evening, which was pretty often, and then we took a rest. And whenever any of the officers came to see them they used to look our way, of course, and we used to look back, and

then they used to laugh, and we smiled back, and then they bowed, and so did we, and didn't she look daggers at us, just, the nasty, stuck-up cat! Yes, she wanted all the admiration for herself—that was what she wanted.

And after we had given them about a week to find out what we could do, there came another "Dear Madam" letter, objecting to our musical performances—*this* time as an intolerable nuisance—and saying if they were not stopped as desired, he should take measures to remedy the matter, and promptly. We didn't let mother see that letter either; we put it in the fire like the other, and let him take measures, as many as he liked. Maud just went on playing till her fingers nearly dropped off, with the top open and the loud pedal down, and I sang till I nearly cracked my throat. But we paid the author of distinction out finely, didn't we, just? And we found out that "Bill" is only her brother, after all.

EPISODE V.

Evangeline Moggeridge had written thus far when a change came o'er the spirit of her dream and Maud's, and as the unfinished manuscript happened to fall into my hands, I concluded that

it would not be ill-spent time for me to wind up the little story of the piano fiend in a fifth episode compiled from accounts which reached me from either side of the wall.

It was thus: about five weeks had passed since Mrs. Strange had positively, but in terms of politeness, declined the honor of the Moggeridge girls' acquaintance by returning their cards—five weeks which to her had been a period of torture indescribable. Letters proving of no avail, and a legal remedy seeming to Strange too slow in operation, and also too costly a process for such a case, he set his wits to work, and took a revenge of his own—he flattered himself it was novel; he knew it was, so to speak, by wholesale. And the following day he put it into use. The effect was miraculous, for Evangeline Moggeridge was at the piano a-singing

“An-n-n-n-n-gels, e-e-e-e-e-ver br-i-i-i-i-ght and f-a-a-a-a-air !

Ta-a-a-a-ke, o-o-o-h, ta-a-a-ke m-e-e-e t-o-o-o—”

when there was a BANG — CRASH — BANG ! next door, followed by a “Twiddle-diddle, twiddle-diddle, diddle-dee.” Then a “Pom—Pom—Pom—Umtra—Umtra—Umtra — BANG — BANG — BANG !

Twiddle-diddle—Pom—Pom—Pom! Twiddle-diddle dee. Ting-a-ting-a-ting-a-ting-ting!” followed by a maddening “Tum-a-dum, a-rum-a-dum, a-rum-a-dum, a-rum-tum-tum! BANG—BANG—BANG!”

Evangeline did her best—what might be called her level best—but “Angels ever bright and fair” hadn’t much chance against the horrible discord and tumult of a band practice!

As I said, she did her best. She got Maud to come and play that she might stand up and shriek with better effect and more power. But what availed the shriek of a single human throat against the “BANG” of the big drum, the “CRASH” of the cymbals, the distinct “Twaddle-diddle, twiddle-diddle dee” of the piccolo, the “Pom—Pom—Pom” of the trombone, the “Umtra—Umtra—Umtra” of the ophicleide, or, stay—perhaps I am not correct on that point—still there is a thing in a brass band which goes “Umtra—Umtra,” is there not? And putting that aside, what chance had the fair Evangeline against all these, backed up by the “Ting-a-ting-a-ting” of the triangles, and the absolutely maddening “Rum-a-tum, a-rum-a-tum, a-rub-dub-dub” of the little drum as it rattled out the good old tune—

“What could old Napoly do,
With all his Cuirassiers,
When he met on the field of Waterloo
With the British Grenadiers?”

I give you my sacred word of honor, reader, that “angels,” no matter how bright and fair, weren’t in the same street with it!

Well, after three days of this the Misses Moggeridge gave in and rested from their labors. Unfortunately their works followed them, and the band practices next door continued, worse than that, from morn till noon, and from noon till dewy eve; the miscellaneous practising, apparently, of all the separate instruments in the entire band of forty-five performers, each hammering at some difficult and elusive passage, each in a different key to his comrades, continued also. And then there were explanations between Strange and brother Algy, and the distinguished author got her three hours of peace at last.

DISTINCTION.

SIR ANTHONY STAUNTON, Captain of the Black Horse, walked briskly into the anteroom one bright March morning, just before lunch-time. Sir Anthony, better known as Pops, from his inveterate habit of popping the question to almost every girl to whom he was introduced, in the most blissful disregard of the melancholy fact that he was as poor as a rat or a church mouse, and had barely enough income to cover the modest expenses of a cavalry officer who didn't mind owning the truth of his circumstances, was a good specimen of a regimental favorite, for he was a man whom everybody liked—liked thoroughly and sincerely. He was a well-made and well-favored fellow, rather over the middle height, not handsome, but possessed of a pair of handsome gray eyes, and a set of dazzlingly handsome teeth, a perfect digestion, and a heavenly temper, only to be roused by an injustice or a wrong. As to what some men, nay, most men, would resent as an insult, Pops was so contemptuous as to be proof

against it; indeed there was a story afloat in the Black Horse that one Grand Prix week Pops went to Paris, and with his usual eye to a pretty face promptly went for the fiancée of a young French nobleman, instead of attending to the races, as he had purposely gone to do.

A rumor had crept back to his regiment that Pops had instantly been called out by the enraged Frenchman; therefore, as soon as he showed his face among his comrades he was eagerly questioned: "Was it true?"

"Oh yes," answered he, with a laugh, "it was true enough."

"And what did you do? Fight?"

"Fight! No, not quite," contemptuously.

"But what did you do?" persisted his questioners.

"Oh! I punched his head—the ass," replied Pops, laughing again.

Well, as I said, he went briskly into the ante-room one bright March morning, straight up to the letter-rack.

"Any for me?" he said to one of the fellows who was examining the letters with an eye to his own correspondence.

"Yes, one from your aunt," answered the man,

promptly—a reply which raised a general laugh, for Sir Anthony Staunton's aunt, who was also his godmother, was a very favorite personage with the officers of the Black Horse.

Sir Anthony laughed with the others. He was never, as a rule, behindhand with his share of any jollity or chaff which might chance to be afloat; but the laughter ceased as suddenly as it had come, for, lo and behold, up in the left-hand corner of the rack was a square envelope, on which was written in a stiff, precise, and singularly angular style of caligraphy, his own name—"Sir Anthony Staunton, Bart., 25th Dragoons, Wharnccliffe"—and as his eyes fell thereon, Sir Anthony Staunton fairly groaned within himself, for he knew that the letter would sooner or later have to be answered.

But when he had mastered the contents of the epistle he groaned out aloud, in such genuine distress and dismay that every head in the room was raised, every voice silenced, every letter and paper lowered.

"What's up, Pops?" said half a dozen sympathetic voices.

"Oh, I've gone and done it this time—no mistake about it!" he groaned.

“Done what? Not offended them, surely?” Urquhart asked. They all knew that an immense fortune hung on his relations with his godmother-aunts, and felt for him accordingly.

“Offended them?” repeated poor Pops, in what was positively almost a wail. “No; but just listen to this, and then tell me what the devil I’m to do!”

“Go on!” cried several voices, encouragingly.

So Pops went on—and read aloud part of the letter he had just received.

“‘I am delighted to hear,’ it said, ‘that you find your new station so congenial to your tastes and pursuits. Your Aunt Lavinia is busily engaged in writing a daily manual for the use of our soldiers and sailors, and has asked me to write and tell you that, since she considers it utterly impossible to produce good and useful work unless she has an opportunity of closely studying the lives and habits of the class for whom she writes, she has decided that we shall come to Wharnecliffe and pay you a long visit. If you remember, dear Mrs. De Swinton, when her son was colonel of the —th Lancers, was accustomed to pay him a visit of many months’ duration each year, and it is partly from her glowing accounts

of those visits, and the pleasure and novelty of the life, that your Aunt Lavinia has persuaded me to take this step—’”

“D—— Mrs. De Swinton!” burst out Pops, savagely, at this point.

“Did you ever hear De Swinton doing it when the visits were just coming on?” Lord Archie asked. “No? Well, I have; and I can assure you, my poor persecuted Sir Roger, any little mild additions of yours in that line are quite unnecessary.”

“Oh, De Swinton wasn’t the man to do anything by halves when he did set about it!” laughed Urquhart. “Well, Pops, what next? Go on.”

“—the wisdom of which I was very doubtful about myself, knowing full well that you are a young man living among young men like yourself, while we are two old women full of crotchets and fads of all kinds. However, you know, my dear boy—no one better—that on the score of her being ten years my junior, your dear aunt will persist in thinking herself a skittish young thing, whom any vagary of conduct becomes. And how touchy she is if reminded that she is an old woman of sixty—old enough to be your grandmother rather than your half-aunt; therefore I have reluctantly,

after saying everything I could to prevent it and turn her from her purpose, given in. If she comes—and I am afraid she will, since she has so set her heart upon it—it will be my duty to accompany her; and while, my dear boy, thus necessarily inflicting myself upon you, endeavor to render the visit as little unpleasant to you as possible. She bids me say that a couple of rooms—yours, for preference—will be all that we shall require, with the addition of a small sleeping-room for our maid, Warner. Mrs. De Swinton never had more, and had all her meals from the mess, as your Aunt Lavinia wishes to do also. I assure you, my dear Anthony,’ the old lady went on, ‘I never sat down to pen a letter with greater reluctance, and I am sure that you will exonerate me from any blame in the matter. Although I am an old—I may almost say an aged—lady, I feel that it is a highly improper step to take, we not being like dear Mrs. De Swinton, married women. But if I absolutely refuse to come, your Aunt Lavinia is quite capable of coming by herself, in which case there is simply no saying what might happen.’ ”

When the yell of laughter which greeted this had somewhat subsided, poor perplexed Pops continued—“ ‘What is worse,’ the old lady went on

to say, 'I dare not say as much to her, for if I do she is quite capable of leaving the whole of her fortune to that detestable Emily Spenderley's hateful boy—' ”

“And that would be a calamity,” remarked Archie Falconer, feelingly.

Sir Anthony Staunton folded the letter and replaced it in its envelope.

“What the devil am I to do?” he said at length.

Several heads were shaken, but nobody offered any suggestion for the suppression of the frisky old lady who was pining for an opportunity of studying the dragoon in his habit as he lives.

“It must be stopped somehow, or I shall have to leave the regiment,” the wretched victim cried at last. “I can't face the men after my Aunt Lavinia has been let loose in barracks, and been cackling in and out of the troop-rooms and so on. Oh, hang it! it'll have to be stopped somehow.”

“Oh, tell her small-pox is raging in barracks, and the town simply decimated by scarlet-fever,” Lord Archie suggested.

Sir Anthony shook his head. “She would know that was a lie,” he said, dolefully. “And it's no use telling her that the moral tone of the regiment

isn't fit for a lady to come to, she'd only be all the more anxious to come."

Orford burst out laughing. "Did any of you fellows ever hear the old butler at Idleminster Mansion House give a description of 'them 'ere ladies' meetings?'"

"No. How? What was it?"

"He asked me one day when I went to call on the Mayoress if I'd come to call, or was I come to the meeting? 'Meeting,' said I, 'I didn't know there was a meeting. What's it about, John?' 'Why, sir,' said John—he's a regular old character, you know, been there forever—'it's one of them 'ere ladies' meetings—unfortunate sisters and such-like. You'd better stay, sir,' said he, with a sly twinkle in his keen old eyes, 'for, between you and me, there's a lot of old maids gets together here, and they talk and talk and talk, and—well,' said he, 'if ever I want to hear something downright BAD, I just gets behind the door when there's a ladies' meeting on, and, sure enough, I hears it.'"

Sir Anthony laughed with the rest, but not so heartily as was his wont; and he repeated his doleful question, "What the devil am I to do?"

"Well now, if I were you," suggested Urquhart, gravely, "I should write back an effusive letter

of prospective welcome, and I should just hint—only just gently drop a hint, you know—that the Scarlet Lancers happened to be an uncommonly dirty lot, and that, try as we will, we cannot rid the barracks of the hordes they left behind them as a legacy.”

“Hordes—hordes of what?” said young Rags, not understanding, though the light which suddenly irradiated Staunton’s face was sufficient to tell him plainly that a loop-hole wherewith to escape the torture had been thrown open, and a brilliant suggestion made. “Hordes of what?” he asked.

“Live-stock,” answered Urquhart.

“Rats!” cried Rags.

“Beetles!” shouted another voice. “All old ladies are frightened of beetles.”

“Which is it?” Rags asked.

“*Bugs!*” answered Urquhart, tersely.

And in consequence of this suggestion a diplomatic and cautious letter went back by return of post to Miss Staunton, written in Anthony Staunton’s handwriting, but in reality the outcome of Thomas Urquhart’s clever brain.

“MY DEAR AUNT THEODOSIA,” it ran — “Of course I shall be delighted if you and Aunt Lavinia

will pay me a visit *à la Madame De Swinton* ; but as I am not commanding officer, nor even for the matter of that a field-officer, you will, I am afraid, have to rough it a great deal more than ever she had to do when visiting her son. The quartermaster is going to do the best he can in the matter of quarters [as a matter-of-fact the quartermaster had never even heard the subject mentioned], but they will necessarily be very limited. I don't know what to say about Aunt Lavinia's book—[‘Yes, call it a *book*, it sounds important,’ said Urquhart, when Sir Anthony had got thus far]—I'm afraid the ordinary dragoon can't be got to read anything of that sort. You see they have to work pretty hard, and don't get very much time to themselves, when, of course, they like to get out of barracks if they can. But, all the same, it is awfully good of her to think of trying it.” Then there followed a little affectionate wind-up, and he remained “Your affectionate nephew, Anthony Staunton.”

By return of post there came back an agonized little note from Miss Theodosia—“Why, my dear boy, did you not at least make the attempt to damp Lavinia's ardor somewhat? Her heart is now more set upon coming than ever.”

Sir Anthony promptly wrote back, or at least Urquhart did through him, to the effect that the quartermaster had, with a great deal of trouble, made arrangements for their accommodation, and that preparations were being pushed on accordingly with as much speed as possible. "And, by-the-bye," the letter ended, "do either of you chance to mind a few bugs? Some people don't, you know."

Miss Theodosia replied, without so much as the loss of a single post, "Do you mean to say you are afflicted with those disgusting and loathsome insects? They don't bite me; all the times we have been in Venice, I never had so much as a single bite; but Lavinia is a perfect martyr to them, and Warner declares if one is within a mile of her it will get to her. I am very sorry for you, my dear boy," the good old lady wound up, "but believe me there are worse things in life *even than bugs*."

"Maiden aunts who are skittish at sixty," commented Urquhart, with a grim laugh. But still Miss Theodosia's hint was not apparently taken, and Staunton wrote back immediately.

"Your rooms are being cleaned out to-day. Yes, we have bugs, swarms of them; but with plenty of Condry and Keating scattered about I hope they won't worry you. They don't worry

me, and so I have not as yet taken as much trouble to get rid of them as some of the other fellows. I shall have a good piano sent in and a few plants in bloom, so everything will look very comfortable by the time you come. By-the-bye, I hope you don't mind the smell of stale tobacco; I *can't* get it out of my carpets and hangings."

"I simply abominate tobacco, as you know or ought to know, my dear boy," wrote back Miss Theodosia. "And I gave your Aunt Lavinia fair warning this morning when I read your letter to her, that if the smell of it is not out of your carpets and hangings when she persists in dragging me out of my own airy and luxurious house to what you call 'rough it' in barracks, I shall certainly have an immediate return of the protracted and violent sickness from which I invariably suffer on the journey to and from the Continent. Lavinia is exceedingly self-willed, and in spite of the stale smoke and the—[there was a slight hesitation here, as if the old lady had made a brave attempt to nerve herself to write the word itself, but that refinement and a horror of the subject had been too much for her]—creatures, still holds firmly to their coming. Warner gave notice this morning, as Lavinia insisted that it was all mealy-minded

nonsense, and if her mistress, quite as much of a martyr to them as herself, could for a good cause put up with them, there was no reason why the maid should give herself airs on the subject. As I said, Warner gave notice. She has been with us twenty-three years, and what we shall do without her I really do not know. The under-maid Phœbe is young, very pretty, and particularly giddy. Lavinia has told her to prepare for the journey, to the girl's unconcealed delight. I don't know—I cannot tell what may be the consequences.”

“I can,” remarked Urquhart, when Staunton had read thus far. “Well?”

“At the same time,” the letter went on, “I can see plainly enough that your Aunt Lavinia is distinctly uneasy in her mind. She told me to ask you whether you had got rid of them or not?”

“It will be all right,” was Urquhart's comment; “she won't come now.”

“I shall bolt if she does,” answered Sir Anthony, positively.

“But she won't,” asserted Urquhart, in a tone of quiet conviction; “and now write your answer.”

And this was the answer that Staunton sent—

“MY DEAR AUNT THEODOSIA,—I have just come off a court-martial, and am writing in haste to catch the post. I am awfully sorry about Warner. Can’t you persuade her to stop? All the same I shouldn’t try to bring her here. Phoebe won’t mind a few bugs, and the men will be sure to give her a good time. There are not many pretty girls in Wharnecliffe, and if I remember, Phoebe is a marvellously pretty lassie.” [“Never saw the girl in my life!” Staunton remarked, with a laugh, as he wrote the words.] “As to the bugs themselves—well, I really must confess we have *not* got rid of them. You see they are all over everywhere, and as fast as we clear them out they come in from the other rooms in the same corridor. I’ve told my servant to catch a hundred or so of good lively specimens, to let Aunt Lavinia see what manner of things she may expect.”

And the following morning, before breakfast, Sir Anthony’s servant came to him with a telegram—a message of agony.

“On no account send a hundred of those things here—or even one. Am writing.”

And when Sir Anthony took the orange mis-

sive to Urquhart, Urquhart sat down and simply roared over it.

Later in the day the promised letter arrived.

“MY DEAR BOY,—Your Aunt Lavinia nearly had a fit. She did indeed faint, or nearly so, and Warner had to bring salts and vinegar and what not. I do not think that she had believed there were as many as you said; but when you suggested sending a hundred, as if they were there for the picking up, she at once gave up all idea of ever setting foot in Wharnecliffe Barracks; and she and Warner, who have not spoken for more than a week, made it up.

“I trust when you next come to see us, you will be *very careful* about your things. Your Aunt Lavinia suggests that you and all your belongings shall be placed in a temporary quarantine, and thoroughly fumigated. Phœbe is bitterly disappointed, and has been weeping all the morning.”

“So that danger is over,” Urquhart laughed.

“Thank the Lord!” ejaculated the no longer wretched victim, piously.

“And henceforth,” Lord Archie laughed, “when

you go to visit your venerated relatives, you will enjoy the proud distinction of being labelled 'unclean.'"

"Better than the distinction of looking like a fool," answered Pops, gayly.

A HIDDEN HERO.

LORD ARCHIE FALCONER was keeping his hunters—to the tune of a modest couple—out of barracks, and was on his way to see them when he chanced to meet with Marcus Orford.

His way lay through a poor and forlorn-looking district, laid out in small and narrow streets of ugly little featureless houses, built in rows to the cultivation of nothing but a certain air of crushed and melancholy meek neatness, and situated about midway between the barracks and the town of Wharnecliffe. It was peopled chiefly by such of the Benedicks among the rank and file of the Black Horse as were not on the strength of the regiment.

Marcus Orford was laughing as Lord Archie approached him, and he felt his own face expanding into a broad smile instantly.

“What are you laughing at?” he demanded.

“I found yesterday,” the other answered, “that Arnitt was down with a severe attack of congestion of the lungs—a very serious case, his wife

told me the doctor had pronounced it. I sent him a basket of things down this morning—ice and grapes and jelly, and so on, you know—for, poor devil, it must be hard lines to be ill in such a hole as that”—jerking his stick over his shoulder to indicate a row of squalid little houses behind him—“and Moore brought back word that he was very bad—as bad as he could be. So I thought I’d come round and hear how he is to-day. ’Tis a tidy little place, but terribly bare and comfortless, and I found half a dozen youngsters all squatting about the door-step, and evidently expecting every minute to hear that the end had come. ‘Halloo, my man,’ said I to the biggest boy, a lad of seven or eight, ‘are you one of Arnitt’s boys?’ ‘Yes, sir, we’re *all his’n*,’ he piped out. ‘Oh, are you?’ I said, thinking Arnitt may well look as hungry as he generally does. ‘And how is your father this afternoon?’ ‘Very bad, sir—mortal bad—as bad’s he can be,’ the youngster piped out in reply. ‘An’ the dorector ’e says if father lives till morning there’ll be some ’opes; but if he don’t live till morning he won’t have no ’opes at all.’”

Lord Archie laughed outright, and Marcus Orford continued: “But I don’t believe Arnitt will

live till morning, poor chap; and if not, what his wife will do with all those youngsters is rather a hard question."

"Yes; decent fellow, Arnitt; I had him with my horses for a time. Pity he married without waiting for leave; it's such a drag on a man, unless the wife happens to have some business of her own; and Arnitt, poor beggar, is so overriden with children, and his wife's line of business not of much use to her."

"What was it?"

"Oh, she was a circus-rider, and a ripping smart girl, too. I remember seeing her the year I joined. She had a pretty little face, and a pretty little figure, too, and a lot of light crinkling fair hair that seemed to wave all over her head in shining flecks of light; I never saw such jolly hair."

"She's a pretty little woman now," Marcus Orford remarked. "Well?"

"We were all more or less gone on her," Lord Archie continued. "The little favorite, we used to call her. Her circus name was Mademoiselle Favorita—her own, God knows! However, none of the fellows could make any impression upon her whatever, not the very smallest, and one af-

ternoon, about six o'clock, I met her going down to the circus with Arnitt, and then I knew why. And, sure enough, very shortly after that she and Arnitt got married. If he'd put in for leave, and waited till he got it, which he would have done, they might have got on very well; but he married her straight out of hand, and there they have stuck ever since. Arnitt ought to have got on, for he's a gentleman—a 'Varsity man, too; but he's been unlucky, unlucky all round."

"You don't mean it," Orford cried, in huge surprise, "that he's a gentleman—and a 'Varsity man?"

"Oh, but I do, though—an Oxford man. I remembered his face distinctly as a man of Brazenose when I was at Paul's, but for the very life I couldn't then, and have never been able since to put a name to it. And yet I almost fancy—and I think of it every time I get a fair look at him—that I've seen the face with a tuft above it."

"A tuft! you don't mean it?" Orford cried.

"Yes, I do. I get back to a certain point, and then I seem to come to a dead wall, which blocks me completely."

"Oh, you must be mistaken, or be mixing him up with somebody else," Orford declared. "It

couldn't be, you know; somebody would be sure to recognize him."

"Well, I may be," Lord Archie admitted—"I may be, but still I've had the same impression ever since I have been in the regiment. Still, as you say, I may be mixing him up with somebody else."

"Why don't you ask him outright?"

"I did hint at it once. One of the horses was sick, and we had a good deal of trouble with him; and one afternoon I was watching Arnitt put a bandage on, when the conviction that I had known him before came upon me stronger than ever. 'This is not the first time you and I have had to do with a horse together, Arnitt,' I said to him. He looked up at me quickly, a flash of a look as if I might be a detective who had been tracking him for years, and had hunted him down at last. 'For God's sake, don't, my lord,' he said, all in a hurry; 'it's no use pretending that I was once a—' 'An under-grad at Brazenose,' I put in; when, poor beggar, he gave such a cringing shiver that I felt sure I'd put my hand on an open wound, and wished I had let him alone. 'I want to forget all that, my lord; I sunk that life and everything connected with it long since,' he said,

desperately. 'I wouldn't have joined the Black Horse if I'd ever guessed you would have been gazetted to it.' 'Oh, it's all right. I'll not remind you of it again, Arnitt,' I told him; for, of course, I didn't want to make his burden any heavier for him to carry. I knew his face, but could not remember his name, and should not try to find out. 'Only,' I said, 'I do remember perfectly well that you didn't call me "my lord" in the old days.' 'Don't talk about the old days,' he burst out. 'I forfeited all that made them worth having, and I can bear it; but don't remind me of them, if you know what pity is—don't.' So of course I told him I wouldn't, and no more I did. I never tried to find him out, but I've often thought about it, and tried to fix the name I knew belonged to the face, but I never could; it has always eluded my memory just as a dream often does. Yes, there is a queer story at the back of Arnitt's hard life, I know that. It's a strange fate for a man to have been a tuft at Brazenose, and then a private in a marching regiment, with a wife picked out of a circus. And he's fond of her, too; oh yes, for she is not a bad sort, and was always pretty. Yes, it's a queer story, very. Well, I must be getting along—by-bye."

"By-bye," returned Orford, and went on his way, wondering much about the story he had just heard. Meantime Lord Archie went farther along the street, and turned in at an archway between two of the little featureless houses, which brought him into the stable-yard. He just cast an eye over the animals, and then inquired of the groom which was Arnitt's house.

The man pointed it out, and Lord Archie crossed the narrow, ill-paved little street, and knocked softly on the panel of the door. It was opened by the pretty, fair-haired wife, who looked worn to death, and had a baby in her arms; two older children, yet little more than infants, clung to her skirts, and the bigger ones stood in the background looking shyly on.

"Good-day, Mrs. Arnitt. How is your husband?" he asked.

"Oh, my lord, he's very ill," she answered, with quivering lips and eyes brimming over, not because she had been weeping much, but because the sympathetic tone went straight to her heart, and made it quiver like a harp swept by a strong hand; "he's very ill indeed; and Dr. Granger scarcely gives me any hope at all."

"Who's attending to him? Have you got a

nurse or anybody to help you?" Lord Archie inquired.

"Yes, my lord; Mr. Orford sent one in as soon as ever he heard Arnitt was ill—very ill, that is. But he will never get over it, my lord—never." And lowering her voice almost to a whisper: "He's got something on his mind; I know it; I'm sure of it."

"What kind of a something?" Lord Archie asked.

"I can't tell that, my lord," she answered; "but something there is, for certain. Arnitt is a very quiet, close sort of man, and though he's one of the best husbands that ever drew breath, and has never given me a cross word since we were married, and has never raised his hand to one of the children—and they are trying at times, there's no denying it—he's never told me a word about his past life, never one. I don't know anything about him, my lord, not even where he was born, or whether he has a relation in all the world. But he isn't like me, my lord; and though he's no better now than a common soldier, he's a gentleman, Arnitt is; and sometimes I could fancy he was even more than that."

Lord Archie's conscience pricked him a little

that he was obliged in honor to keep from this distressed little soul, with her pretty, fair hair and blue, tear-drowned eyes, the fact that he knew the truth of much of what she was saying. Then a sudden thought came into his mind.

"Would he like to see me, do you think?" he asked.

"I feel sure he would, my lord," she answered.

"Well, you might ask him," he said, for he had no desire to disturb what probably were his ex-groom's last hours by recalling painfully to his mind the incidents of the past—incidents which he most likely needed no stimulus to remember, and which would now be crowding back upon him, as the past does when we have nearly done with the present.

So she went up the creaking little stairs with the baby in her arms, leaving Lord Archie standing in the midst of the group of awe-stricken and bewildered youngsters. He spoke to one or two of them, the eldest boy among them, and found that Marcens Orford's little anecdote had been liberally doctored in the matter of pronunciation and accent, and that he, in common with all the others, spoke very well indeed, and if not quite up to his own standard, still very much above the average

of a better class of children than those living in that part of Wharnecliffe.

And then Mrs. Arnitt appeared again, and said the sick man was very anxious to see his lordship if he would go up. So Lord Archie went up alone.

It was a poor little room in which he found himself when he reached the top of the creaking stairway, but it was clean and orderly. The quilt upon the bed was white, if coarse, and there was a pleasant-faced, middle-aged nurse in a white cap sitting beside the patient, who rose and made her obeisance when he entered under the low doorway. Arnitt made a sign to her to leave them, and Lord Archie advanced to the side of the bed.

"Why, Arnitt," he said, "I am very sorry to find you so ill; what ever have you been doing to get like this?"

"I've about come to the end of the journey," said the sick man, in a painful undertone, scarcely more than a whisper.

"Oh! I hope not, I hope not," put in the officer, kindly. "You must keep up your heart. You know while there's life there's hope, and a man just in his prime, as you are, mustn't think of giving in yet a while. Besides, there are others to think of, you know, Arnitt—there's your wife, and

there are your children—you must make an effort and do your best to live for their sakes.”

“Poor souls, God help them!” murmured Arnitt, feebly. “I’ve never been much good to her, and she’s been the best and dearest of wives to me; but there’ll be a provision for her and for them, never fear; and, Lord Archie, it was about that I was anxious to see you when Nelly told me you were down below.”

“Ought you to be talking so much?” Lord Archie asked, gently interrupting. He had noticed the change in Arnitt’s manner of addressing him—a change from “my lord” to “Lord Archie”—and it made the man more familiar than ever.

“Oh yes, yes—what will it matter in the end?” impatiently. “Just a few minutes more or less. I must tell you some things, and get you to help my boy into the rights and the position which I had to forego and give up. I know you will, when I have told you my story, beginning from the time when you were Archie Falconer of Paul’s, and I was Studham of Brazenose.”

Lord Archie uttered a sharp cry of recognition and surprise. “Studham of Brazenose, and in the ranks of the Twenty-fifth Dragoons! Good heav-

ens! what could have possessed you? You must have been mad—mad!”

“No, I wasn’t mad, not in the least; I was only the victim of circumstances,” answered the sick man, with a sad smile. “But, tell me, didn’t you know all along?”

“I never guessed it. I never suspected it for a moment. I only knew I had known you long ago in the old ’Varsity days. Yes; of course you are Studham; but, heavens! how you are altered!”

“Fourteen years of the ranks do make a change in a man, and the Studham you knew was very young and very foolish,” the other answered.

“Then what can I do for you? Why don’t you claim your own, and take your own place in the world? It’s absurd to think of you, Studham—nay, but you are not Studham, but Mannersleigh, now, since your father died—dragging out such a life as yours must of necessity be. It’s absurd, and we must get you out of this at once.”

“No, no; it’s a poor little hole, but I’ve been happy in it. I’ll stay here to the end of the chapter. We’ve got to the last page, I fancy. Still, my children have rights, and I have kept silence long enough.”

“For Mannersleigh; that is, for your brother Taff.”

"Yes, Taff; do you ever hear anything of him? Have you any idea what kind of a life he is leading?"

Lord Archie laughed. "Oh, he has turned over a new leaf; gave up the old ways with the old name. But how came he to prove your death? He must have done it to claim and gain your father's title."

"I don't know; I have not heard a word of him for years—never since the day I last saw him, when I told him I had proof, *proof* of his guilt, the guilt for which I have borne the blame all these fourteen long weary years past. I gave him the opportunity of flying the country, which he scouted, declaring I must be mad, crazy, idiotic to dream of suspecting him."

"Of what?"

"Murder!" the sick man answered. "He foully and cruelly murdered my mother's niece, our cousin, because he had made— But what am I saying? I am wandering in my head, that I go blabbing out the secret I have kept all these years to my own hurt and ruin." He looked anxiously at Lord Archie as he spoke, as if he thought he would rush out of the room and proclaim the whole of his secret to the world at large; but Lord Archie soon set him at rest.

“Don’t worry yourself. You didn’t mean to tell me? Well, I shall never disclose it; don’t worry yourself about it. And now tell me what steps I shall have to take to secure your son’s rights. Have you made a will, and left your papers in order?”

“Everything! They are all in that little tin box. As to my will, that is made too; but I should like to add something to it, if you will consent.”

“I? Oh, of course; what is it?”

“To act as trustee to my children and their mother. I dare say she will marry again, and I’ve provided a suitable income in case of it.”

“I’ll do it, of course; but, Studham, tell me,” reverting instinctively to the old name of their ‘Varsity days, “why, when you had the power to take everything and provide properly and suitably for your wife and children—why did you bury yourself in the ranks, and let that young ruffian Taff usurp your place?”

“I’ll tell you. As I said, Taff flatly refused to clear out of the way, and challenged me—yes, actually challenged me to produce my proofs against him. I had them safe enough, and so I told him—they’re in that box now. I shouldn’t

have spoken — what would have been the good? It would have broken my father's heart, and tarnished our old name; and the girl was dead, had been lying dead among the sedge and the bul-rushes for hours before we found her. All the ruin that could come upon the Mannersleigh family would not bring her back again, so I determined to keep silence, simply because I could not see the good of speaking.

“I had been all that day sitting with my lord, but I happened to be the first to find the poor girl, lying face down in the water, and as I turned her over I tore open the bosom of her gown in doing it, when there fell out a letter in Taff's handwriting, asking her to meet him in that place at four in the afternoon. I concealed it instinctively, and seeing her hand clinched upon something, forced it open and took from it a locket which he had worn on his watch-chain at luncheon. I knew it, because we had all noticed it. There was a bit of broken chain hanging to it, evidently where she had clutched at it in the last agony of her struggle with him. I showed the letter and the locket to him that very night, and then, owing to the gossip of one of the servants who had seen me take the locket, or rather, had

seen me take something out of her hand, I was put upon the trial as first witness. As soon as I saw in the report that it was known I had the locket, I made up my mind to clear out of the way at once, for though I could keep silence, I could not give false evidence. I could easier bear ruin and social extinction for myself than I could break my father's heart by putting a rope round my brother's neck. So that night I bolted, and then I got over to Ireland and enlisted in the Twenty-fifth. But I didn't know, I never heard, he was dead. When was it?"

"About a year ago," Lord Archie replied.

"Ah, I never heard it," sighing; "and you say Taff has turned over a new leaf?"

"Presides at philanthropic and religious meetings, and so forth. I believe he's quite a shining light among the unco' guid."

"Ah, he'll need it all!" dryly. "I fear, though, there's not much real good in him. He was always a bad lot, but my father loved him best of us all. Well, my time is getting short, and if you will get me a lawyer here at once, I'll settle about the trusteeship; the sooner the better; there's no time to lose. For the rest it will soon be over. I shall not see to-morrow; of that I am certain.

As soon as you hear of it, I want you to go and see Taff, and tell him all I have told you; tell him that you hold my written word, that it is all true, that unless he admits my boy's claim, and allows him to take his place without delay, you have my orders to disclose everything — everything! But you will have no trouble; and I should like to lie in the old church-yard at home beside my mother. You'll do all this for me, Archie?" anxiously.

"I'll do it all to the best of my power," said Lord Archie, with a great lump in his throat and a white mist dancing before his eyes, so that the sick man and the little meagre room were blotted out from his vision.

"I didn't know he had gone, or I should have done it before. I always meant to put my children in their own place, but I didn't know the old man was dead. I only kept out of the way for his sake; it was all for his sake."

Lord Archie rose to his feet. "I'll go for a lawyer at once; but, Studham, old fellow, can't you make an effort and get well? I wish you would."

"It's too late now, Archie; but thank you all the same."

"It seems such a pity," regretfully.

"It can't be helped," patiently; "and I kept it from him."

And that night Private John Arnitt died, and a week later was buried as John George Alured, tenth Earl of Mannersleigh, when Stephen, his son, reigned in his stead.

A REGIMENTAL GHOST.

ALTHOUGH the little town of Wharnecliffe was such a bright and cheery spot, and the cavalry barracks such favorite quarters with the gay and gallant heavy and light horse, which go to make up that part of the Army which is called the Cavalry of the Line, the barracks were once the scene of a very dreadful tragedy, which happened during the time that the White Dragoons had them in possession; for during the small hours of a morning, after a particularly gay and rollicking guest-night, a young officer, holding the rank of lieutenant, was foully murdered, done to death by the stab of a sharp-pointed knife driven right to the very shaft in his back, but why and by whom to this day never transpired. The strictest investigations and inquiries were set on foot, very large rewards were offered, but in spite of all the efforts of the best detectives in Scotland Yard, urged forward by every officer in the regiment to do even better than their very best, the mystery re-

mained a mystery, unravelled and unexplained—one of the many murders which do not out.

In due time the White Dragoons marched out of Wharnecliffe, their place being taken by the Scarlet Lancers, who, in their turn, after staying their allotted time, marched out like their predecessors, to make way for the Black Horse; and so, after making a horror-stricken sensation from one end of the kingdom to the other, and being rather more than the traditional nine days' wonder, the cruel and dastardly act became merely a memory, leaving nothing, not even a stain, to show to those who came after that anything had ever taken place under the roof which covered the large block of buildings set apart for officers' quarters, which was out of the ordinary run of every-day barrack life.

Naturally enough, during the time which the White Dragoons spent at Wharnecliffe after the tragedy happened, that particular room remained untenanted. In time the place of the murdered officer was filled up, and he was forgotten, except for an occasional sigh and a "Poor old Jack, he would have liked this, or he would have helped with that;" but the room in which he had met his violent death remained unused. However, when the Scarlet

Lancers took over the barracks from the outgoing regiment, it happened that no inquiries were made, and no information given, as to the identity of the scene of the tragedy; and it being a very good apartment, was portioned out as part of the quartermaster's quarters. And then, when the Black Horse took over the barracks in their turn, the junior major, not seeing the force of the quartermaster appropriating one of the best rooms in barracks for his own use, expressed a wish to have it as one of the two to which his rank entitled him, and, as a matter of course, got it.

Now it happened that the officers determined to give a ball on the last day of the year, and invitations were early sent out to that effect. There were unusually good ballrooms down in the town, spacious and lofty, with supper-gallery and half a dozen pleasant and cosey little boudoirs of much attractiveness and comfort; and it was perhaps on this account, and partly owing to the extreme popularity of the hosts, that the invitations were eagerly accepted, and refusals were few and far between; and as a good many guests were coming from a distance, it became a matter of some importance to settle how those who, being for the most part ex-officers of the regiment, would infi-

nitely prefer to be put up in barracks, could with any convenience be disposed of.

"There is the major's room," suggested young Mackenzie. "You know he left it at the disposal of any one who wanted to invite a guest during his leave;" for the major had gone to the south of France for his long leave, and knew how hard up for room his brother-officers would be about the time of giving the ball.

"Yes, but Winstanley is to have that; and where we shall contrive to put Carstairs is more than I can imagine."

"I'll give up my room, and sleep on the sofa in Major Escott's sitting-room."

"That sofa makes into a bed; Escott uses it himself in case of emergency," said Urquhart.

"Then that settles the question nicely," said Mackenzie — "Young Rags" he was generally called — and Carstairs, of the White Dragoons, being the last for whom sleeping accommodation had to be provided, the matter was dismissed as settled and done with.

On the night previous to New-year's eve there was, as many of the guests had already arrived in the town, a very large influx of guests at mess; and on the afternoon of that day Carstairs, of the

White Dragoons, made his appearance, and was duly installed in young Mackenzie's room. Mackenzie was not in barracks when he arrived, and later in the evening, when officers and guests were assembling in the anteroom before dinner, he asked to be introduced to him, and expressed a polite hope that he was not putting him to any great inconvenience. "Not the very least in the world," answered young Mackenzie, heartily. "I am camping in Major Escott's sitting-room, and am as jolly as possible."

"Has he the rooms over the colonel's?" Carstairs asked, with the interest of one who knew the barracks well.

"Oh no; St. Anbyn, the senior major, has them. No, Escott's rooms are on the right of the entrance door," Mackenzie answered.

"Ground-floor?" the other inquired.

"Yes," Mackenzie answered. "I have the sitting-room, which comes first, and Winstanley has the bedroom."

"I wonder he took those rooms," said Carstairs.

"Why? They're the best in barracks."

"Yes, I know; but the one next the front door was the room where poor Jack Donovan was murdered."

"Good heavens! you don't say so. I don't believe the major or anybody else ever thought of asking which was the room," Mackenzie cried. "I dare say he wouldn't have taken it if he'd known, much less have asked for it, for he's rather a nervous, superstitious sort of man, I fancy."

"Will you mind sleeping there?" asked Carstairs, feeling a tinge of compunction for having turned the lad out of his own quarters.

"Not a bit in the world, bless you," the lad answered. "I can't say I believe in ghosts—shouldn't believe in one if I saw one, which isn't a very likely thing to happen to me or anybody else. In fact I should rather like to see a specimen. By Jove! I'd give it a warm welcome." Then he sighed involuntarily: "Ah, but poor dear old Jack, what a good fellow he was! He and I were at Cheltenham together."

"Yes; I think to see him lying with that great knife in his back was the cruelest sight I ever saw," Carstairs answered. "And you can't think how coming back into this old room has brought it all into my mind, as freshly as if it had happened but yesterday." And then there was a movement towards the mess-room, and the two, Carstairs and young Mackenzie, followed the rest and passed in

together, and the subject of poor Jack Donovan and his quarters was dropped.

Among the more roystering spirits, however, the news spread like wildfire, and considerable excitement ensued.

"Poor Jack," said one, "that prig Escott would be frightened out of his seven senses if he knew it."

"Hush — sh!" with an uneasy glance towards the senior sub., who was sitting close at hand, and would probably have sat, with all the crushing weight of his authority, upon such remarks being made at the mess-table itself.

"By Jove! but if I don't get myself up like poor Jack's ghost, and try the effect on him when he comes back, my name's not 'Enery 'Olmes," muttered another.

"You'll frighten him into a lunatic asylum if you do," said another youngster, with decision. "Besides, if it came out you'd look uncommonly awkward playing the fool with the major. Much better try your hand on young Rags over there; he will be better fun, and you won't have so long to wait to see the effect of your make-up."

It does not take a particularly brilliant idea in the form of a practical joke to spread like wildfire

among the youngsters of a regiment, no matter whether they be youngsters in mess-room or canteen. In this instance wildfire is but a poor way of expressing the rapidity with which the new suggestion sprang into existence and grew into maturity. It was wholly new—it was not impossible that it would be startling in its results—to a certain extent it was dangerous, and moreover it bordered sufficiently on the uncanny to have a flavor and a zest which of late their practical jokes had not possessed; and in addition to all these considerations, it could be carried out at once without any delay whatever—in fact, it could, would, and should be put into practice that very night.

In next to no time they had it all arranged, all cut and dried, and ready for carrying out. The three whose heads kept so close together during the long festivity of dinner were Norreys, Eden, and Graham. Each was anxious to have the honor of personating the ghost; but Graham, having originated the idea, absolutely declined to give up his rights, and kept to his determination like grim death; therefore it was finally agreed that he should be the one to strike terror into the heart of the lad whom they one and all were accustomed—chiefly because he had passed a brilliant examination at

Sandhurst, and had entered the Army with flying colors *as a student*—to regard as an out-and-out duffer—nothing short of a regular muff—more likely than not to be driven half frantic by the sight of an apparition, which he would reasonably believe to be the ghost of poor murdered Jack Donovan.

Having settled this point to their agreement, if not quite to their satisfaction, the three conspirators had next to determine upon the costume suitable for the occasion. Norreys suggested ordinary mess-dress, with flesh-tints carefully rubbed over with phosphor—"It will look perfectly ghastly," he declared.

"Yes, that's so; I agree to the phosphor, only we sha'n't be able to get it easily to-night," returned Eden.

"Besides, that would indicate that poor Jack had come straight out of the infernal regions," objected Graham; "and really we can have our joke without insulting the poor chap's memory in that way. No; I propose the orthodox sheet, modified—a sort of laid-out style; you know there is something much more really ghastly about the laid-out style than anything else. Tie the face up with a white cloth, tie another round the head, chalk the face well, and just rub a handful of

matches over it, so as to outline it round the lips, under the eyebrows, and down the line of the nose. Let all the rest appear in the orthodox white sheet; depend upon it, there is nothing so thoroughly awful in the silent watches of the night as a mysterious and ill-defined, shapeless something in a white sheet—a something in white. A mere figure in ordinary mess-dress would be nothing—it wouldn't frighten a child; but a horrible, shivering, shuddering, nameless, featureless thing—a *something*—is generally enough to make the stoutest heart quail and the bravest blood curdle; at least, I know mine would."

"Yes, Graham is right; trust your uncanny, second-sight-endowed Scot for being well up in all the blues and horrors," laughed Eden. "Well, then, I say we had better leave the toilet of the nameless, shuddering, featureless *something* entirely to you. Poor old Rags, look at him, how he's enjoying himself to-night. He little thinks what a treat is in store for him, and how his poor dear little legs will shake under him by-and-by. Ah, well, where ignorance is bliss—you know; he'll know too, soon enough."

"Shall you speak, Graham?" asked Norreys, after a glance, and a grin at Mackenzie.

"I shall groan," answered Graham, promptly ;
"not loud, but with a pathetic plaintiveness—gro-ro-ro-an ! gro-ro-ro-an ! See?"

"Yes, I do; and if you don't mind Uniacke will hear, too, and then good - bye to your chance of groaning at Rags to-night."

"You might carry a bundle of joss - sticks in your hand," suggested Eden, "alight, you know. They make a nice, sweet, overpowering, sickly sort of smell in the room, and would give an air of realistic truthfulness to the scene, which would quite finish young Rags off, if the laid-out style and the groans don't accomplish his destruction by themselves."

"Have you got any?" Graham inquired.

"Yes, I've a bundle of them in my room."

"Oh, then I'll use them; and I'll tell you what, I'll run round to Austin's quarters and borrow that marble hand of his, the thing he brought from Rome last year, and calls 'an antique.' If Rags is bold enough to come to close quarters, it will have a nice laid-out, cold, clammy feeling about it."

"Poor devil," murmured Eden, half-pityingly.

"Oh, there's nothing like doing a thing thoroughly while you are about it," laughed Graham.

"No, that's true," agreed Norreys; "but won't Austin want to know what you're going to do with it? I know he sets great store by the thing."

"I'll borrow it on my own responsibility," the other laughed. "Depend upon it, Austin will go to by-by quite too muddled to notice whether it is there or not, and I'll put it back when we've frightened Rags out of his senses. Austin always does get pretty well muddled on a big night, you know."

"Yes, his head won't stand liquor at all," answered Eden, who had taken many and many an opportunity, afforded by the combination of a big night with Austin's weak head, to plan and carry out with equal zest and enjoyment the simple sell and the elaborate hoax which obtain and find favor in the inner life of a cavalry regiment.

Now, it was, of course, an unusually big night on that occasion, and it was very late before Graham and the other two conspirators could, unperceived, slip away from the now almost uproarious company. It was not, indeed, until the best stories began to spin around the mess-table, and whist was in full swing in the adjoining room, that they made the smallest attempt to do so, and even then they went off one by one, and at considerable in-

tervals. Graham was the first to go ; and he, on his way to his own quarters, invaded those belonging to Austin, and borrowed the loan of the marble hand, or, as Austin called it, "his antique." It was a fine, long-fingered piece of sculpture, and so chilly to the touch that Graham felt quite a perceptible thrill pass up his arm as he grasped it ; yet, full of a desire to leave nothing undone which could in any way tend to add to the reality of his make-up, he, as soon as he reached his own quarters, straightway deposited it in the safe and cool shelter of the huge can of water which stood in the middle of his bath, in readiness for his morning's tub.

Then he proceeded to make up his face ; and surely no beauty going to a ball, even a beauty who was getting a shade *passée* and desperately anxious to conceal the ravages of time and gayety, ever took more infinite trouble and pains to produce a desired effect. The way in which he carefully whitened his entire countenance, so that he looked a great deal whiter than most dead people look, the way in which he blacked a stont pin, some six inches long, in the gas, and finding that no good, flung it aside, and tried the same means with a pipe-stem, and then, with the greatest care

and skill, drew a thick line across his fair eyebrows and under his blue eyes, were all really works of the highest praise had they been done in a better cause. Then he got a box of matches, and with careful manipulation, first of a wet finger, and then of half a dozen matches rubbed well over the spot damped by the finger, managed to produce a fairly strong phosphorescent light of a ghostly bluish color over his eyes and round his lips: he was obliged to put out the light to see the effect of this, which so entranced him that he promptly executed a sort of war-dance—or, by-the-bye, it might have been a Highland fling—to the reflection of his own uncanny image in the glass.

“I shall have to rub on another supply of phosphor,” he said to himself. “I’ll do that the last thing of all—and now for the laying-out style.”

He didn’t find this quite so easy; however, by the time Eden turned up, he had safely secured a white towel about his face and head in a manner exceedingly uncomfortable to himself, and adding wonderfully to the general ghastliness of his appearance.

“Good Lord! what a loathsome object you do look, Douglas,” exclaimed Eden. “I don’t believe a real ghost would be half as bad.”

"I dare say not," Graham mumbled, indistinctly. "I'll tell you what, this laying-out style is deuced uncomfortable."

"Not half so uncomfortable as poor Rags will be by-and-by," laughed Eden, grimly.

Graham had just completed his entire toilet when Norreys came on the scene.

"Good conscience!" that young gentleman ejaculated, as his eyes fell upon his comrade, "but you'd be an unpleasant sort of chap to meet in a lonely passage on a dark night. I think we must try it on the major after all."

"We'll see," mumbled the ghost; "let's get Rags disposed of first. Is he gone to roost yet, do you know?"

"Yes; he came up with me; said he was tired out, and should be asleep before his head touched the pillow," Norreys answered.

"Then come along," said the ghost, eagerly.

It was but the work of a moment to slip rapidly along the corridor and down the wide stone stairs, followed at a little distance by the two others. In a twinkling the single gas-jet burning just outside Major Escott's rooms was turned out, and the door of his sitting-room was softly opened.

The ghost advanced into the darkness. "Er-

er-er-er-eogh!" he began, in a low, sobbing moan, which rose gradually higher and higher as the wind sobs among the sighing branches of a clump of trees and gradually rises into a sharp shriek of pain, or what sounds as such.

There was a dead silence, broken only by the faint and regular breathing of the sleeping lad. So the ghost began again—"Arrrrrrrr-ah! Arrrrrr-ah! Arrrrrr-ah! Arrrr-eogh!" and there ended with such a sharp convulsion of shuddering that young Mackenzie woke with a start.

"Kurrrrrrrrr-eogh!" shivered the ghost.

"What the devil's that?" cried Mackenzie, aloud.

The shuddering and the shivering and the moaning went on, and young Rags sprang out of bed; the ghost hearing him groping about for the matches went a step nearer, and began his moans and groans anew. Then, quick as thought, the lad, still overpowered with sleep, being unable to find the matches, seized the poker, and tried to stir the dying fire into a blaze; a feeble flicker was the result, but it was enough to show him the ghastly manner of visitant which had come to him.

"Just clear out of this," he said, authoritatively;

but the ghost shuddered and groaned worse than ever.

Young Rags made a dash at the major's pistol-case. "By Jove, I'll stand none of this fooling," he cried; "if you don't clear out of this I'll fire—upon my soul I will."

"Kurrrrrrrrr-eogh!" gobbled the ghost, when there was a sharp click—a flash—a cry—no, two cries—the loudest by far from young Rags, as the ghost fell to the floor with a dull thud, and the boy, who had never dreamed that the pistol was loaded, dropped upon his knees beside him.

And then some of the others hearing the pistol-shot dashed in, and Mackenzie saw—"Oh! God—oh! God," he cried, and turning the pistol upon himself, fired again, and sent the bullet home—yes, right home to his very heart!

BROKE.

SEVERAL years before the Black Horse got their route for Wharnecliffe, a young fellow walked into barracks one fine morning, and asked for the shilling.

It was not an unusual proceeding, yet something unusual in his appearance made the adjutant ask him a string of rather unusual questions—unusual, that is, at such an interview.

“You want to enlist?” he said, giving him a sharp soldier’s look up and down.

“If you please, sir,” was the answer.

“Er—have you been in any trade?”

“No, sir.”

“Know anything about horses?”

“I’ve been among them all my life,” was the simple reply.

“Can you ride?”

The stranger laughed. “Yes, sir; I can ride.”

“Ah! Can you—that is, do you know anything of Latin?”

“Yes,” with a shrug of his shoulders, as if to

indicate that his knowledge was not great in that line.

"Greek?"

"Ye—es," more doubtfully still.

"Modern languages?" persisted the adjutant.

"Ye—es," most doubtfully of all.

"Ah! what modern languages?"

"French," rather disparagingly, "and er—some German," was the reply.

"Oh, French, and *some* German; that means you speak French best. In fact, you're a gentleman."

"I shall not make the worse soldier for that, sir."

"I don't know—I don't know. They generally do. What's your name?"

"George Jones."

"George Jones. Oh! that's not your real name, of course"

"It is the name I wish to be known by, sir," with a certain air of dignity, which made the adjutant think better of him all in a moment.

"I see—I see. Well, now will you take my advice?"

"I don't know till I hear what it is," guardedly. The adjutant laughed. "It is good, and it is

disinterested, for men of your age and build are just what we want."

"And it is—" asked the stranger.

"To go home and make it up with your people. No—stay," as he was about to speak. "I know what the life is; you don't. My father is Lord Dayrell, but I rose from the ranks, and I know what it is. It's all very well for the general run of recruits; it saves them from worse things; but to one of us it's a life of—well, never mind, only I never enlist a gentleman if I can possibly help it. You had better go home and make it up again."

The lad—for he was but little more—shut his mouth like a steel-trap, and turned a face full of resolution and dogged determination upon the officer. "I'm very much obliged to you, sir, but if you won't enlist me I can try another regiment."

"Oh! very well—very well; I'll take you," shrugging his shoulders with an air of regret that his advice had not been better received. "But you don't mean to wear those rings, do you?"

The lad who wished to be known as George Jones looked down upon his rings and blushed—positively blushed.

"I'll take them off; I forgot them"—apologetically, and slipping them off his hand.

"Have you no one you can send them to?" questioned the officer, kindly. "You will certainly lose them if you keep them in your kit; besides, it's not right to leave them about—they're a temptation."

The lad hesitated. "I—if you wouldn't mind—or"—he stammered.

"Oh yes; I'll seal them up and keep them for you if you like," returned the officer. So the young man handed over the rings, a few formal questions were put, and then the adjutant raised his hand to touch the little bell which would summon the sergeant from the outer office. Something, however, made him stay the gesture and ask yet another question.

"You were at Eton?" he said.

The other looked at him hard for a moment.

"No; Charterhouse," he answered; "and I don't wish—"

"Very well; I will respect your wish. And now you can go. I hope you'll do well."

"Thank you, sir," answered George Jones, and followed the sergeant out of the room.

So, in due course of time, he became a trooper in the Twenty-fifth Regiment of Dragoons, was meas-

ured for his uniform, put into the awkward squad, taught the mysteries of goose-step, and initiated into the horrors of that Inferno which is called the riding-school, and before very long had won the good opinion of almost the entire regiment, and had grown into one of the smartest dragoons in the whole of the ranks.

And the two rings which he had worn during that first interview with the adjutant remained still in the keeping of that officer, who before sealing them up and inscribing the packet with the name and regimental number of George Jones, had examined them in no small surprise and astonishment. One was a broad band of gold set with a single diamond of great purity and value, and inscribed within the ring with the single word "Edith;" the other was an exceedingly massive signet, set with a great lustrous amethyst, in which were cut the arms and motto of a certain noble house ranking almost with royalty in its princely state and grandeur.

"Good God! what a young fool! Some quarrel about a woman, I'll be bound," muttered Dayrell to himself. And then he sealed the two rings up in a sheet of paper, and put them for safety in the inmost recesses of his despatch-box, after which

for anything which passed his lips, he apparently forgot all about the matter.

Whether it had been a quarrel about a woman which had been the means of inducing George Jones to enter the ranks of the Black Horse or not, that young gentleman neither deserted nor was bought off by his relatives. On the contrary, day after day slipped by and grew into weeks, weeks grew into months, months into years, and still he remained under his *nom de guerre*, growing from recruit into trooper, from trooper to corporal, and from corporal to sergeant, from which honorable position it was expected in the regiment he would soon be removed by the gift of a commission.

So far so good, and such was the history—the regimental history, that is—of Sergeant George Jones, who had quite proved himself an exception to the general belief among officers that the gentleman recruit is not likely to be of much good, or to turn out an acquisition of very high value. He had not found life in the ranks of the British army a bed of roses—quite the contrary. He had felt the pinch of the shoe many and many a time, till the pain of it was almost beyond endurance. He had sickened and turned aside in disgust and loath-

ing from the food—supposed to be of the best, but presented by swindling contractors and well-tipped quartermasters and their favorite tools among the non-coms, under the noses of honorable subalterns who didn't know a leg of mutton from a shin of beef—how should they?

And there were other things which made the life exceedingly hard for a gentleman to bear, and much more so for this scion of nobility, whose boyhood had been passed amid princely splendor: the regular hours of work, the fetching and the carrying, the air of do this or do that, of come here or go there, with which the sergeants one and all were accustomed—as men who are not very well bred do if they happen to be clothed with a little brief authority—to address the unfortunate beings who are below them in rank. And there was one great want in his life, one great space which he had never a chance of filling—the want of companionship, the companionship of those of his own order. True, he did not want, or rather need not have wanted, for sympathy and for friendship had he cared to take such as lay to his hand. He was smart and straight and true; from first to last it was well known that his word was his bond, and that if a chap wanted a good turn done for

him, George Jones, whether with the prefix of private, corporal, or sergeant, was the man he would be most likely to get to do it. There was many and many a fine young fellow in the Black Horse who would have laid down his very life for the man who had won the admiration of them all; who never gave himself any airs; who never treated the lowest-born among them with less civility and respect, so long as he kept a clean slate; who, as one poor passionate lad said—a lad who had come into the service off tramp, and had grown accustomed to carry all his lessons and numberless other difficulties to him—"Sergeant Jones is a 'owling swell, might be a dook, but bless my eyes if you'll ever 'ear from 'im any of the swagger that you gets from that stuck-up flunky of a pettifogging cobbler's son that 'as wormed 'isself into favor, and calls 'isself a quartermaster; no, blest if you do, no more nor if Sergeant Jones had been born under a hay-rick."

But when somebody repeated the same to Sergeant Jones, thinking he might get a little information out of him as to his belongings, he only laughed, and asked what on earth it could matter whether a man was born under a hay-rick or in a palace?

"I should say the palace was nearest the mark with yon, sergeant," ventured the other.

"Nonsense!" said the sergeant, laughing again. "I was born at a little eight-roomed cottage in Scotland," and walked away.

"What they calls a shooting-box," said the other to himself—which, as a matter-of-fact, was a guess not wide of the mark by any means.

Upon the whole, therefore, it may be understood that, in spite of much that was intensely trying to himself, he got on well in and with the Black Horse, until at last, after nearly four years' service, he fell upon an evil day—a very evil day—on which he was posted for the duty of weighing and helping to pass the rations.

It certainly was not his fault, for the work was the most absolutely distasteful to him that he had ever been put to do since the day he joined the regiment. Still more certain is it that his being set to do it was not the work of the gentleman whom the ex-tramp had designated as "that stuck-up flunky of a pettifogging cobbler's son that 'as wormed 'isself into favor, and calls 'isself a quartermaster;" for he would as soon have posted the archangel Michael for the duty as Sergeant Jones, whom he knew to be a gentleman, and guessed.

was an aristocrat, and was, as he was well aware by experience, what he called "so beastly honest." If the truth be told, and, as an accurate and truthful chronicler of the ways and doings of this particular regiment, I must tell the truth, it was the doing of our adjutant, the Honorable George Dayrell, who had long suspected that a good deal of dirty and underhand work was going on in the regiment, and had made up his mind to put a stop to it if it lay within human power to do it; and as he was pleased to give the order that George Jones should take his share of a certain duty, why neither Quartermaster Charles Murray nor Sergeant George Jones had anything to do beyond simply to obey, although Murray hummed and hawed and d—d a good deal, and Jones turned fairly sick within himself.

And so on the following morning he quietly took his turn, and an interest in the general proceedings such as made the quartermaster's fingers fairly itch to double themselves into fists and let fly at him straight in the eyes; and then, when about half-way through the business, he suddenly created a sensation by proclaiming, "*This meat stinks!*"

Immediately a profound silence was the result,

in the midst of which the contractor came to his side, and, under pretence of examining the joint, said, in a hurried whisper, "Hush—sh! I'll give you twenty pounds to hold your tongue." In answer to which Sergeant Jones promptly knocked him down, without condescending to reply further.

A babel of voices broke out instantly as the contractor lay spluttering on the ground. Sergeant Jones stood like a god of vengeance over the great ugly joint of raw meat; and then the quartermaster swaggered up and pretended to examine it as the contractor had done before him.

"The meat is sweet enough," he declared. "Arrest this man immediately."

Unfortunately down at the bottom of all his imperturbable coolness and *sang-froid* Sergeant Jones possessed a temper—a temper which when fairly roused might very reasonably have belonged to old Nick himself; more unfortunately still, it was roused then.

"The meat stinks," he reiterated, doggedly.

"Take the meat away!" roared the quartermaster.

"Touch it if you dare!" thundered the sergeant.
"I hold it in the Queen's name."

"I say the meat is sweet enough," screamed the

quartermaster, who was in a mortal fright lest adjutant or orderly officer should chance to look in.

"And I say it stinks—touch it at your peril!" thundered the sergeant, altogether forgetting the difference of their rank.

Thus dared, the quartermaster clawed at the joint, upon which the sergeant laid a resolute hand, with a grip like iron and the strength of a lion.

"Arrest this man instantly," cried the quartermaster, turning to the men at hand.

But nobody moved, and the other stood confronting him, with a contemptuous smile upon his handsome face.

"By all means," he said, coolly—so coolly that not a soul suspected the tempest of fury which in truth possessed him. "You, men, arrest me at once, *and the meat with me.*"

"Put the meat down!" yelled the quartermaster.

"I shall not *do that* till I put it before the adjutant," returned the sergeant, quietly.

"Address me in a proper manner, sir. I am one of your officers. Call me 'sir.'"

"*I call you 'sir'!*" contemptuously; he then lost his temper all in one blaze of wrath, and added, "I'll see you d—d first."

And then the fat was in the fire, and no mistake about it. All the same, George Jones stuck manfully to his joint of meat, and succeeded in depositing it at the feet of colonel and adjutant, when there was a right royal row, and he promptly found himself under arrest for using bad language to a superior officer.

"And why the devil couldn't you have reported it to me quietly?" asked Dayrell, irritably, when, an hour or two later, he visited the eagle in his cage—he was just like an eagle in a cage.

"Look here, sir," was the reply; "that's been done before. Sergeant Parkes tried that, and what was the result? The meat was changed, and Sergeant Parkes was broke for bringing a false charge against that double-eyed thief Murray, who is—I'm speaking as myself, if you'll allow me—the biggest villain unhung. What was the further result? The disgrace broke Parkes's heart as well as his stripes, and he went headlong to the devil, never did any good after, and drowned himself at last in a fit of delirium. *That* was the result of speaking quietly about it."

"Well, you'll be broke for this to a certainty," said Dayrell, vexedly.

The other shrugged his shoulders carelessly, but

all the same a very dangerous gleam came into his blue eyes. "If I am—" he began, then checked himself. "Well, sir"—assuming the respectful official tone—"if I am, I am, and it can't be helped. But the colonel has the meat anyway, and it stinks."

"Yes, it stinks," agreed Dayrell, as if that was a very small matter for consideration. Then he said, suddenly, "By-the-bye, what in the world made you enter the service? Debt?"

"Oh no; I wanted a complete change, that was all. I wanted to lose myself for a bit, and try to forget all I had ever known before. I was pretty miserable when I joined, but I'm about tired of the service now. It's a thankless sort of field—not worth keeping straight in. I think I shall clear out of it before long."

"Well, it will be a pretty thing for your family if you're broke for this," commented Dayrell, vexedly.

"My family! Oh, I shall not be the first of the family who has suffered in a good cause," returned the sergeant, carelessly; and so the adjutant left him to bear his captivity as best he might.

He did not like it at all; the enforced idleness was irksome to him, the lack of liberty fretted

and worried him, and he had more time than he wanted to sit and think about the woman who had brought all this trouble upon him—the Edith whose ring of betrothal to him was still safe in the adjutant's keeping; the Edith who had jilted him for his elder brother, and for whose sake he had buried himself in what was simply a living grave, when he might much more sensibly and reasonably have gone to Africa and shot lions, whose skins he might have sent home to let her know how utterly he had ceased to regret her.

However, the past was past, and could not be undone now. Edith was his brother's wife, and he—thank Heaven for it!—was heart-whole again. Still, though he had made light of the matter to his adjutant, his spirit was not a little dismayed at the prospect of what the immediate future probably held in store for him—the prospect of being broke for what was in reality simply doing thoroughly the duty he had been told off to do. Or stay— No, it was not for that at all; and his just soul told him more plainly than any sentence of court-martial would have power to do that two wrongs do not make one right, and that he had been as wrong—though neither dishonest nor mean—to swear at the quartermaster as the quarter-

master had been to cheat her Majesty's soldiers out of their proper and healthy rations. And in time the court-martial came off. Sergeant Jones had heard previous to this that an inquiry was pending concerning the quality of the meat supplied to the troops, but when his time came he found that this fact did not save him in the least. He had sworn at a superior officer in the presence of many witnesses, and the sentence of the court-martial was that he be therefore reduced to the ranks, or, in common military parlance, "broke," for it.

The Black Horse were all as sorry as men could be for it, with the exception of the dishonest steward, who vainly imagined from this result to the trial that his own affair would be hushed up and made light of. It was with a fiendish joy that he saw the handsome sergeant brought out to be disgraced in the eyes of the whole regiment to which he had been so great an ornament and credit.

It was over in next to no time. There was just a general parade, the reading of the sentence, a rip or two with a penknife, and then George Jones was marched off, a sergeant no longer, but only a private, number 862.

He bore it well. The entire sympathy of the

regiment went with him. To a man the Black Horse could and would, with a little encouragement from the victim, have risen and stamped Quartermaster Charles Murray into a shapeless jelly. But not one word of encouragement did they get.

"Wait a while," said he. "I deserved to be broke, for I knew better than to swear at an officer; at least I ought to have known better. I ought to have known better, too, than to let my devil of a temper get the upperhand of me as I did. But wait a while."

So the men did wait, and before very long the news spread like wildfire throughout the ranks that George Jones had bought himself off, and that his place would know him no more.

"And he never done nothing to pay that Murray out!" cried one.

"Well, *I* don't believe in a-setting down and bearing every kick that's given you," said another.

"Jes you wait," cried the ex-tramp, whose faith in his patron had never wavered, "and you'll see."

Thus confidently bidden, they did wait, and they did see—what gladdened the heart of every true man among them. For one morning about a week after George Jones had said good-bye to his

old comrades, there turned in at the barrack gates a smart high cart and a pair of bay cobs driven tandem. *He* was driving—a groom sat behind. He looked neither right nor left, but drove straight down to the officers' quarters, and sent in a card for the quartermaster, Mr. Murray. The card was inscribed "Lord Ronald Sartoris."

Mr. Murray was in his own quarters, and came bustling out in haste when he heard that no less a person than Lord Ronald Sartoris was inquiring for him; and then when he found that Lord Ronald Sartoris and Sergeant Jones were one and the same man, and that he carried a long, lithe, stinging, cutting tandem whip, he— Well, as the troopers said among themselves when talking it over later in the day, "By —, but it *was* fine."

And after that Mr. Murray sent in his papers, but the exact meaning of it the ranks never knew. But, as they said, "It *was* fine."

JEWEL OR PASTE.

SHORTLY after the terrible tragedy took place in Wharnecliffe Barracks, which, as I recounted in "A Regimental Ghost," resulted in the deaths of two of the most popular subalterns of the Black Horse — Mackenzie and Graham — an official announcement appeared in the *Gazette* to the effect that Lester Brookes and D'Arcy de Bolingbroke had been appointed to fill the two vacant places. In official language it ran thus: Lester Brookes, gentleman, to be lieutenant, *vice* Christopher Mackenzie, deceased; D'Arcy de Bolingbroke, gentleman, to be lieutenant, *vice* Douglas Graham, deceased."

Naturally enough, the officers of the Black Horse looked forward with a good deal of interest to the advent of the two new subalterns. Neither was known to any one of them personally, though all knew that Brookes was the son of an enormously rich iron-master, and might be expected to give himself airs accordingly — airs which would probably make him so insufferable

to his brother-officers that measures would have to be taken which would speedily make the regiment too hot to hold him.

D'Arcy de Bolingbroke, excepting for the information that one of the fellows had picked up somewhere that he was the son of the Dean of Birmingham, was altogether an unknown quantity. About him they hardly formed an opinion at all, though if an outsider had pointedly asked for one, he would have been answered much after this fashion: "Oh! I don't know, I'm sure. What's his father? Dean of Birmingham. Oh! the youngster will be the very devil: parsons' sons always are. You didn't know that? Ah! fact, I assure you."

However, when the two new subalterns joined the regiment and became known to their brother-officers, it was speedily found that all the previous surmises about them had been equally incorrect. Brookes proved a rattling good fellow, handsome, and a good all-round man besides, and as little given to the display of his vast wealth as if he had come into the service with an allowance of but two or three hundred a year.

As for D'Arcy de Bolingbroke, he turned out to be a perfectly harmless and apparently brain-

less masher. The faces of such of the officers as first saw this new addition to their strength were, I can assure you, quite of a regulation pattern as to expression. For behold, instead of the *harum-scarum* scamp, which seems to be the universal form of every parson's son who enters the service, no matter whether he be the son of a great dignitary of the Church, who has put him into an expensive regiment with an idea that he will one day be a credit to him, and make as famous a general as his father has been a clergyman, and with never a fear that he will turn out, as he generally does, a regular bad lot, or whether he be the son of a poverty-stricken incumbent of a fat living of three hundred a year (and what parson may not think himself fairly lucky even if he do no better than that?), who, perplexed and bothered to know what to make of his lad, is honestly thankful when the lad settles the question for himself one fine morning by making a bolt of it, and providing for himself by the simple process known as taking the shilling, and afterwards gives more trouble to those set over him than all the rest of the troop put together. Well, behold, in the place of a scamp of either of these patterns, a harmless masher of the most pronounced type,

with a collar five inches high, a fresh flower in his coat, coat padded and wadded out of all recognition as a thing intended and designed as a covering for the human form divine, knees perhaps not very strong to begin with, but by careful practice brought to the pitch of perfection in the way of crookedness and weakness, hat curly-brimmed, ebony crutch-stick heavily mounted in silver, chains, rings, pins, studs—in short, clad in the entire masher costume of the period.

“Good Lord!” quoth Marcus Orford, when he set eyes upon him for the first time, “what a young fool! Is he going about like that?”

“Not if you do your duty as senior subaltern,” replied Urquhart, promptly.

“Then he won’t,” said Orford, with decision.

Nor did he. The Honorable Marcus Orford was a young gentleman of strong will and of an energetic mind, and he went to work on the task of recasting young D’Arcy de Bolingbroke’s outer man with such right good vigor that within the space of a week he was another—I had almost said *man*, but as that word would imply that he might have been mistaken for a man before, I will say, instead, quite another creature.

“I say—you know,” Orford began, as his first

attack, "Sinpham is coming from town this morning"—he didn't think it necessary to add the information that he had telegraphed for Sinpham himself; "you'd better order some clothes of him."

"Clothes!" repeated young De Bolingbroke, with a fine air of bewilderment.

"Yes, clothes," said Orford, sharply—"coats and trousers and such like."

"But I've got plenty of clothes—as many as I want," ventured the new subaltern, wondering if he was quite going back to the days of his boyhood again.

"You may have plenty of things *you* call clothes," answered Orford, coolly, "but you can't wear them here—not while you belong to a respectable regiment like the Black Horse."

As young De Bolingbroke very soon found, it was useless to argue the point, and within a week he became a new creature, wore ordinary coats and hats, ordinary trousers—ay, and turned them up on wet days like any ordinary fellow; had ordinary boots with ordinary heels, used an ash stick in place of the silver-mounted ebony crutch, and had, as a matter-of-fact, nothing but his late collars and his button-holes to remind him that he

had once been one of the most perfect specimens of the gay crowd of mashers who seem to live for nothing but to crawl up and down Piccadilly. To those emblems of departed glory he clung with the tenacity of grim death, or the pitiable eagerness with which a once handsome woman clings to the last remnant of her fast-fading beauty.

Nor did it take very long to straighten him up as to the knees, and to mend his gait from one simulating that of a semi-imbecile drunken groom to one approaching somewhat to the free, clean walk of a trained soldier. In fact, between drill, riding-school, and chaff, with the additional aid of an overwhelming awe for Marcus Orford, D'Arcy de Bolingbroke, before he had been very long in the service, became a very decent specimen of a cavalry officer, without having, it is true, very much in him, or very much to say for himself. It was some little time before he became anything like popular with his brother-officers — not, indeed, until Sir Anthony Stannton discovered a vein of honor in his composition, such as made his heart warm to him and to give him friendship.

It came about thus: Sir Anthony happened one day to need the loan of a match, or fusee. After

strolling into several men's rooms which were near his own, and finding neither owner nor lights in any of them, he knocked at the door of De Bolingbroke's quarters, and then pushed it open. "Oh, you're here," he remarked. "I've been into ever so many fellows' rooms for a light, and can't get one. Can you give me one?"

"Yes; there are plenty of matches on the chimney-shelf," answered De Bolingbroke. "Help yourself."

Sir Anthony walked over to the fireplace and did help himself, lighting his pipe and taking a few of the wax vestas, which he found in the place the other had indicated, with which to replenish his small-change pocket. "Thanks, awfully," he said, civilly. "It's a queer thing light should be so difficult to find as it is in barracks. Perhaps it's because your father's a dean that you are able to supply the want. As a general rule, though, I find it quite true that the shoemaker's missis does go the worst shod—"

"Yes," said De Bolingbroke, absently.

"I had an old nurse once," Sir Anthony went on, not noticing his tone, "when I was a youngster, you know, and going about with a box of bricks and a hoop; and after I went to school she

went and got married to the village constable, who was a Latter-day Saint. Did you ever know any of that sort, now?"

"No; can't say I ever did," De Bolingbroke answered. "What are they?"

"Don't know, I'm sure. All I know about them is that this old chap, who had been born with a pretty considerable respect for the family (more than any one *outside* the village had, for, by Jove! the Stauntons are all as poverty-stricken as rats in an empty summer-house), used to say we were very good and very gifted people, only we wanted 'light;' we stood sadly in need of 'light.' By Jove! he should come here; he'd find lack of light enough to start as a missionary."

"And the Stauntons are poor?" observed De Bolingbroke, with more interest than he had as yet shown. "Ah!"

He uttered a sigh so heart-rending that Sir Anthony turned and looked at him sharply. "Why, what's the matter?" he asked.

"I didn't know you were in the same boat with me," he said, dolefully. "It's nothing much, only a writ for a tailor's bill; nothing much, only I never had one before; and though they may be the regulation thing to have in the service—and

I see some of the fellows get them by the half-dozen at once—well, I don't like it."

"Neither do I," said Staunton—"neither do I. Only if you happen to be a poor devil without any income worth speaking of, how are you always to help it? And you didn't know I was poor? Yes; I should rather think I am poor. But, bless you, when you've been in the service as long as I have you'll not mind it—you'll never think about it. Bless you, it's nothing when you're used to it. I live on the edge of a razor, but it never is the smallest trouble to me."

"All the same, it's the very devil getting writs, and I don't like it," declared the lad, uneasily. "Besides, I promised my father I wouldn't get into debt. He allows me three hundred a year, and I believe if he saw that thing"—with a disgusting gesture in the direction of a pinkish paper lying half unfolded on the floor—"he'd go off his mind altogether straightway—ramping, stark mad. I believe he would."

"Shouldn't have put you into the Black Horse on three hundred a year, then," answered Staunton, coolly; "because his very reverend sense ought to tell him that an expensive regiment can't be done upon it. By-the-bye, is your governor well off?"

"Oh, beastly rich!" returned De Bolingbroke, with emphasis.

"Then what's the good of worrying yourself about it? My dear lad, he'll make an awful row, no doubt, a blazing row; fathers do, you know; they like it—mine *always* did. But he always paid up in the end, and so will yours, of course. If he don't or won't, you'd better send him to me, and I'll soon settle the matter for you."

"I wish you would," dismally.

"Oh! don't be down in the mouth over it," the other laughed; he thought as little about the displeasure of a dean as he thought of that state of poverty which he was accustomed graphically to describe as living on the edge of a razor. "It's not as if it were a gambling debt, or for a diamond bracelet; *then* you might feel shy about it. But a few poor innocent clothes! oh, my dear lad, it isn't worth thinking of a second time; it isn't, indeed."

"I don't," answered the lad, simply. "But what I do think about is my promise. I oughtn't to have broken it, and in fact I never meant to break it, only Orford made me buy all those new clothes, you know, which I didn't want. And hang it all! it's very well to say, as the dean'll say when I tell

him, that the road to hell is paved with good intentions; but I did think I should be let to wear what clothes I chose when I joined. I dare say I did look a precious young ass, as Orford said; but d—n me! I'd rather look an ass than break a promise any day."

For once in his life Sir Anthony Staunton let somebody make a series of observations without interruptions. He pulled very hard at the pipe; and frowned portentously; then he spoke.

"Hang it all!" he said, "but I thought you were a howling young duffer, and nothing more; but you've got the right stuff in you, and look here: I'm rather well off just now, so let me be your banker, will you? And then you can pull your allowance straight without breaking your promise at all! Let me: I'll be proud to do a service to a fellow who feels as you do."

And that was how young D'Arey de Bolingbroke won the respect and the friendship of one of the most popular men in the regiment.

There were some among the officers who saw the friendship and were puzzled by it, and not knowing—and they never did know from Sir Anthony—the reason of it, failed to understand what he could possibly find to appreciate in the lad

whom they all thought a complete duffer. "He's a very fine fellow at bottom; there are grand points about it," Sir Anthony was accustomed to declare when chaffed on the subject; and as he was not the man to mind either the chaff or the opinion of others, they were not enlightened, and the friendship continued and grew apace, grew and flourished until the regiment got orders for active service and went off to the Soudan—part of that army of vengeance sent out too late for aught but to win for the British government the scorn and the contempt of all the powers in Europe; sent out just as the greatest hero of modern times was sent before it; just as the cruel school-boy, conscious only of his own power, and heedless of all else, ties a string to a bird's leg and lets the little thing fly to its destruction. Oh, shame! shame! to send an army to make war upon those who were not the chief offenders, while the real foe stood afar off and made long noses of derision and contempt at us! Still, full of shame as the ill-fated expedition undoubtedly was, opportunities were not wanting for regiments and men to give proof to the world of what stuff they were made, despite the despicable strings which tied them by the leg, and fortune so far favored young D'Arcy

de Bolingbroke that he was given the chance of showing his brother-officers whether in truth he was jewel or paste.

It happened to fall to the lot of his regiment to make a long march forward with a convoy of fresh water for the troops occupying the zereba on ahead of them, and it happened that on the way a swarm far outnumbering the British troops came down upon them like a wave of the sea or a whirlwind, and threatened by sheer force of numbers to annihilate them altogether.

Owing to the fact that Escott was down with enteric fever, Urquhart, long before promoted to the rank of major, was second in command, and as Colonel St. Aubyn was disabled very early in the fray, he very soon had the whole responsibility of pulling off the affair with safety and credit to the regiment.

Hastily a square had been formed, with camels and baggage-wagons in its middle, where the surgeons accompanying the force were, alas! already too busy attending to the hurts and wants of the wounded. It was necessarily neither a large nor a very strong square. The numerical strength of the enemy seemed endless, and their fanatical courage made them desperate and utterly reckless.

On to the square at various points they rushed—nay, flung themselves again and again, until at last, to Urquhart's dismay, the line was broken.

"Good God!" he cried, "II Troop has given way. I knew they would. Here"—looking round for some one to carry a message—"oh, here, De Bolingbroke, get across there as fast as you can, and send the Blue Jackets over to stop the gap"—for a few men of the Naval Brigade were the only men not of his own regiment.

All along he had been doubtful of the men of II Troop, being youngsters who had never seen active service, and bearing, as entire troops do sometimes, particularly when the officers in command of them happen to lack that smartness and that popularity which are needed to make a troop worth its salt, on the whole, the very worst of characters; but that they would waver and break line as they were doing then he had hardly feared, and he fairly hungered to be in their midst, spurring them to better things.

However, he was bound—having the safety of the entire force at stake—to remain where he was and keep all his men in sight, turning anxiously every moment to watch De Bolingbroke go at his best pace in the direction of the men of the Naval

Brigade. He saw that he delivered his message, and then, instead of coming back at once to his post at Urquhart's side, saw him ride quietly to the mass of confused men and horses at the part where the square was broken, dismount, and disappear among the others.

"What is the young idiot after?" said Urquhart to himself, impatiently, straining his eyes to try and discover him.

But it was useless. He saw that the men of the Naval Brigade went with a run to the breach, and presently those of II Troop seemed to take heart of grace and make a better fight for it. Step by step the horde of blacks were driven back, and the line was reformed. Still there was no sign of De Bolingbroke, and Urquhart turned with a very ugly word indeed to the work which needed his attention and his head at other points. Slowly the time passed on, and at last it was easy to see that the blacks were getting the worst of it—so much the worst of it that they were not only beaten off, but their retreat was followed, and numbers of them sent straight to paradise, as their belief is.

It was not until then that Urquhart was enabled to look after his men who had been wounded. He found poor, prosy, argumentative St. Au-

byn just at the point of death, quite unconscious of his presence or of anything that was going on around him. Lord Archie was badly hit too, but bearing his pain cheerfully, and desperately anxious to hear the exact particulars of the action.

There were others besides Lord Archie who had had ill-luck that day, though none so severely wounded. Urquhart saw them all, and then came suddenly upon young D'Arcy de Bolingbroke sitting on a case of stores, pulling very hard indeed at a pipe.

"Halloo! you here?" he said, sharply. "Why didn't you come back to me?"

"Well, sir," answered the lad, taking his pipe from between his teeth, "I saw that the men of H Troop were getting flurried, and I thought I shouldn't be much use to you if I came back, and I might help to keep their hearts up a bit; so—"

"And who the devil told you to think?" asked Urquhart, angrily. "I sent you with an order, and your duty was to come back to me as soon as you had delivered it. I am perfectly aware you did great service with H Troop, but at the same time you had no business to *think*; nobody expected you to *think*, or asked you to *think*.

How could you tell whether you would be of use or not? As it happened— Why, halloo! what's up?" he cried, suddenly changing his tone; for the lad had reeled off the stores case, and lay a fainting heap at his feet.

After a minute or so the senior surgeon came bustling up. "Halloo! halloo! Why, this is worse than I thought!" he exclaimed.

"What did you think?" Urquhart asked, as he held the lad's head against his breast.

"He told me half an hour since he'd got a cut on his arm, but that I might take the worst cases first," the surgeon replied. "But, by Jove! the bone is pretty well shivered to pieces. The lad must have endured agonies; and the arm will have to come off."

"De Bolingbroke," said Urquhart, an hour later, "I wish to Heaven you had come back to me."

"It was done before that, major," said the lad, simply.

And that was how he showed his regiment whether he was jewel or paste, and that was why he got the cross of honor, which bears two words—"For Valor."

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
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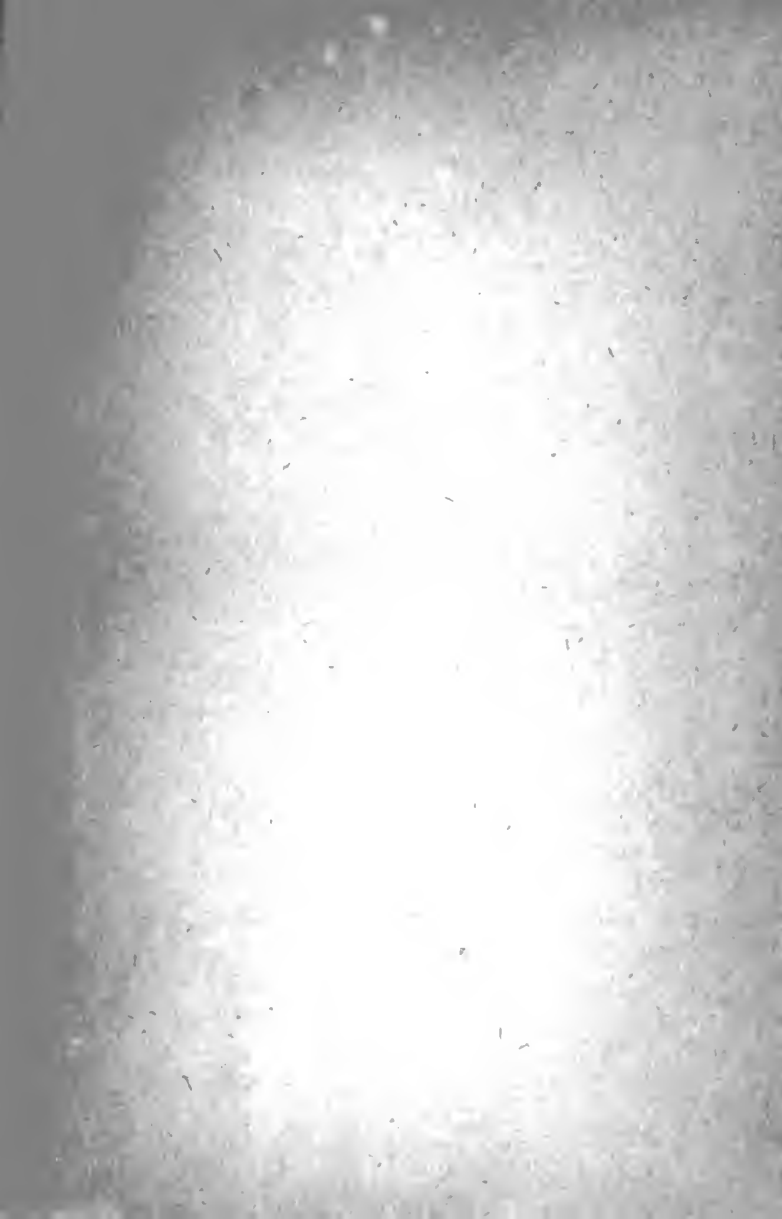
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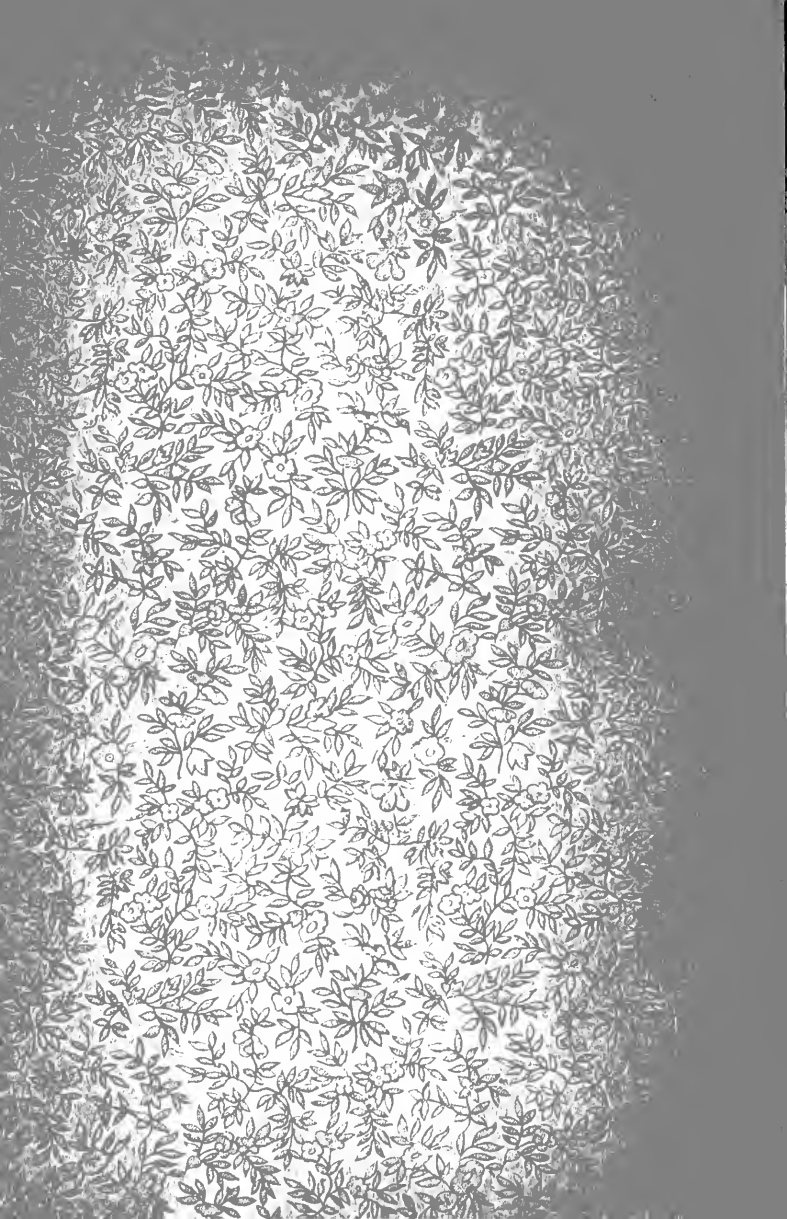
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